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**LET
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GUNS
TALK**

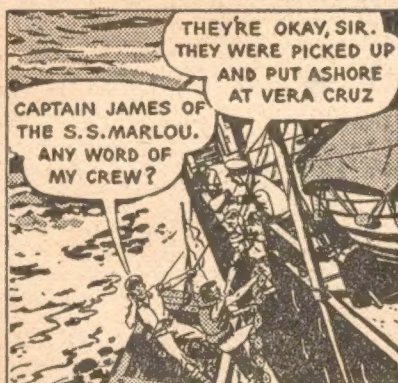
by **CLIFTON
ADAMS**

A CAPTAIN
McCARGO
STORY

by **WILLIAM
RATIGAN**

FIRE AT SEA

has lucky ending for Captain Jim!





Adventure

(Registered U. S.
Patent Office)



August, 1949

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*Cover painted for Adventure by Charles Dye
Kendall W. Goodwyn, Editor*

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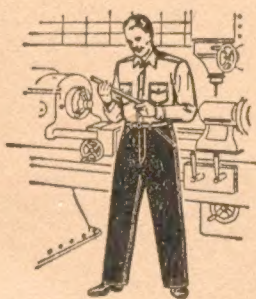
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Ted Palmer Picks:

For Comedy-Romance: "The Beautiful Blonde from Bashful Bend" with Betty Grable, Cesar Romero, Rudy Vallee and Olga San Juan (20th Century-Fox). Technicolor.



Beautiful, blonde, gun-happy Freddie Jones (Betty Grable) gets out of town fast after accidentally shooting the Honorable Judge Alfalfa O'Toole in the seat of his pants. Fleeing on a train, she is mistaken by the conductor for "little Hilda Swandumper from Bashful Bend" on her way to teach at Snake City. This is good enough for Freddie—only she knows nothing about school teaching. Charlie Hingelman (Rudy Vallee), under her charms, gives her a few lessons in teaching at night. Freddie's past, however, in the form of Blackie (Cesar Romero), catches up with her. Through a succession of hilarious events, the town is set afeudin', and Freddie gets taken back for trial. She almost goes free when Blackie offers to marry her, but Freddie finishes that by shooting at the judge again. Where and when? Why, in the end, of course. *Good spoofing with lots of broad laughs.*

• • •

For Adventure—"Illegal Entry" with Howard Duff, Marta Toren and George Brent (Universal).



To assist Immigration Inspector Dan Collins (George Brent) break up a gang that smuggles aliens across the Mexican border by plane, Burt Powers (Howard Duff) gets hired by the gang as a pilot. Lucky for him that Anna Duvak (Marta Toren)—an unwilling gang member—tips him off on a trap to test his loyalty. Otherwise, he wouldn't be able to break the gang up and get the girl. *A semi-documentary with good, fast action.*

For Murder Mystery—"Manhandled" with Dorothy Lamour, Sterling Hayden, and Dan Duryea (Paramount).



A hard-pressed author, worried about a recurrent nightmare in which he kills his wife for her jewelry, visits a psychiatrist to get things off his chest. The psychiatrist's secretary, Merl Kramer (Dorothy Lamour), mentions this dream to Karl Benson (Dan Duryea), a private investigator, and a chain of events are set off which lead to murder of the wife, theft of the jewels and some of the dirtiest double-dealing you've seen in some time. Sterling Hayden is the insurance investigator who works on the case. *A film, well-played for suspense, with a neat, ironical wind-up.*

• • •

For Sports—"The Stratton Story" with James Stewart and June Allyson (MGM).



One of the pluckiest stories in sports is retold in this film version of the life of Monty Stratton—brilliant young Chicago White Sox pitcher who lost his leg in a hunting accident after the 1938 major league season. Overcoming this handicap, Stratton learned to use an artificial leg, and in 1946 pitching in the East Texas League, he won 18 games. Although Hollywood over-sentimentalizes the story, this remains a good baseball picture. Jimmy Stewart plays Stratton, June Allyson, his wife, while Gene Bearden, Jimmy Dykes, Bill Dickey and Mervyn Shea lend authenticity to baseball sequences. *It makes a pleasant evening.*

• • •

For A Western—"The Younger Brothers" with Wayne Morris and Janis Page (Warners). Technicolor.



The four Younger brothers, who were once the "Dead End" kids of the West, along with Jesse James and his gang, find it's tough to go straight herein. A vindictive police officer, leading a misguided posse, and a beautiful, female outlaw leader both try to get the boys in trouble. Some good straight-shooting, hard riding and quick thinking save the day. *It has all you want in a Western.*

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LET THE GUNS TALK



I didn't like being picked up by my shirtfront and getting told off. For a guy standing six feet and weighing a hundred and eighty pounds it doesn't happen often enough for him to get used to it.

By CLIFTON ADAMS

I CHANGED feet on the bar rail for the fourth time and wondered if my partner was going to show up. He was sixty cents late already, the bourbon they serve here in Corinto being fifteen cents a shot. That's too late if you're trying to live on a range detective's pay.

But there wasn't much I could do about it. According to the Old Man, the boss of the Stock Raisers' Association in El Paso, I was supposed to contact our operator here in the saloon. I didn't know what he looked like. He didn't know me

either, but he was supposed to recognize me by the green neckerchief I was wearing. Maybe he was color blind.

I rolled a cigarette and waited some more and went over the place again to see if I had missed anything. I hadn't. There were the two other customers down at the end of the bar, solid citizens like butchers or barbers who had dropped in for a nip to get through the afternoon on. A couple of punchers in the back of the place throwing their hard-earned cash away on a blocked-up roulette wheel, and four cattlemen killing time in a low-stakes poker game. None of them looked like stock detectives, whatever kind of look that is.

Some more time went by and after a



ILLUSTRATED BY
CHARLES DYE

while the saloon girls came downstairs and sized up the crowd. I guess it wasn't much to their liking. Anyway, they didn't make more than a pass or two, then they found tables over on the far side of the place and began to put on fresh paint, getting ready for the evening trade. Still no partner.

I was wondering if I could spend fifteen cents without having it cut out of my salary, and then I saw her.

She was the kind of girl you couldn't miss, standing on the top landing where the other saloon girls had come down, kind of giving the place a go-to-hell look from under a set of eyelashes that looked long enough to sweep the floor with. The bartender had seen her, too. He had a look in his eye that could have got him arrested in some places. Then he glanced at me.

"Man, she's somethin', huh?"

I agreed with him. So did the other men in the place, if that gleam in their eyes meant what I thought it did.

"Before you get too far along with any ideas," the bartender went on, "I better tell you she's took."

"Oh?"

"Like Grant and Richmond."

Well, I didn't have time for that sort of thing, anyway. I was still on a job. If that Association man ever showed up and told me what it was about.

I watched her come down the stairs and smile around just for practice. Everybody smiled back. It was all right to smile and stare it seemed, but nobody tried to take it up from there. I turned back to the bar and ordered another whiskey.

I was halfway through it when a voice said, "You look like you've come a long way, stranger. Maybe you'd like to buy me a glass of wine and tell me about your travels." It was a nice voice. I thought I could guess whose it was. I turned around.



SHE had the kind of eyes that you hear a lot about but almost never see, green eyes.

Green as a Vermont pilgrim, and clear as a desert night. Her mouth was red like her hair, and she wore the regulation dress for saloon girls, fitting like the skin on a peach and cut as low as

the law allowed. And there wasn't much law in this part of Texas.

It was a tempting proposition but I decided against it. I still had a man to see.

I said, "Sorry, Red. I can't manage it."

She smiled. It was a practiced smile. You see a thousand of them every day if you spend much time in saloons. But I liked it.

"Are you broke, or just careful with your dollars?" And when I didn't say anything, "That's a nice neckerchief you're wearing, mister."

I didn't make a move, but I felt like everybody in the place was watching the commotion that was going on inside me. That piece about the neckerchief was what set me off. That was the word the boss of the Association had given me in El Paso, the word that was supposed to identify the other operator to me. Suddenly she got to be more than just a saloon girl with more than her share of looks, she was somebody saying things that nobody was supposed to say but another Association man.

She said, "All right, come on over and I'll settle for beer."

Of course, it could just be a coincidence that she had said something about my neckerchief. I studied those green eyes but they didn't tell me if it was or not. The bartender was beginning to wonder why she was spending so much time on just a drifter. I was wondering about that, too. And I was wondering why the Association man hadn't showed up when he was supposed to, and what was going on behind those green eyes.

I said, "Yeah, I guess beer is more in my line. Where do we sit?"

The bartender gave me a look that said not to blame him if something bad happened to me. He had warned me. She led the way back to one of the tables in the rear of the place, fairly close to the other saloon girls, but not close enough to be overheard if you were careful of how you used your voice.

She said, "You sure are a hard man to convince."

"Not so hard. It all depends on how you go about it."

She smiled again. "You mean the neckerchief?"

Then the bartender came over to take *our* order. She had a short memory. She forgot all about the beer and ordered wine, the way saloon girls will do. The bartender set it on the table, gave me another one of those looks and left us alone.

I said, "What about the neckerchief?"

"Nothing much. About all you see around here are red bandanas, but in other places, like El Paso . . ."

She said the word and let it hang in the air and waited to see if I was going to do anything about it. I did. Coincidence was being pushed too far, I thought. Way too far.

I said, "My name's Wes Baily."

That practiced smile went away and something took its place that began to look real. "I was beginning to wonder if we would ever get it out in the open. I'm the Association *man* you were supposed to contact in Corinto."

I just held the table down with my elbows. When you're just a hired hand the boss has a right to run his business any way he wants. But he can't make you like it. She brought out some credentials to prove she wasn't lying. I still didn't like it.

She said, "Well?"

"Since when did we start using women detectives?"

The real smile skidded a little and she had to call on the practiced one to hold it up. "Since my brother was killed about a year ago. I'm Joyce Muller. My brother was Jeff Muller."

It was my turn again not to say anything. Jeff Muller had been a straw-haired kid with a button nose and the distinction of being able to grin wider than anybody in the Association. Had been—before somebody chopped him down from behind with a derringer.

Joyce Muller said, "Jeff was a friend of yours, wasn't he?"

"Yeah. As close as you can come to having friends in this business . . . Tell me about it."

There wasn't much to tell. He had come riding in to the Association one day and talked himself into a job before the Old Man could think up any excuses. He should have thought up some, though. I think I would have. Of all the things the kid wasn't fit for, being a range detective

headed the list. He couldn't shoot, and he couldn't trail, but the worst thing of all was he liked people. That's the *worst* thing that can happen to a range detective, getting to like people. If you do, sooner or later, you're going to run into one you like, and he's going to blow the back of your skull off. Jeff Muller found that out, but he did it the hard way.

I hadn't been with the kid when he was killed. I probably wouldn't have done him any good if I had been, because it was that kind of job. Shot in the back, in a dark alleyway of some cowtown, because he was poking his nose into somebody else's business. Things like that will happen. Especially if the business happens to be rustling.

So that was it. I told her about it and she knew everything I did then. Maybe more. I didn't even know what I was doing in this God-forgotten part of the world that called itself Corinto. I guessed it was rustling.

That's about the only thing we ever deal with. But I didn't see how it could have anything to do with Jeff Muller whose death had taken place five hundred miles away.

I was getting ready to ask some questions, but then something happened. I didn't see what it was at first, there was just that sudden silence and tightness, like everybody in the place was chewing their knuckles and waiting for something to happen. I didn't know it was about to happen to me.

I turned and saw a big man, big and dark with a bland close-shaven face that held no expression at all. He stood there in front of the bat-wings and stared back at our table. There was no way of telling what was going on in that head of his, but about that time the bartender tipped me off when he started taking all his best liquor off the back bar. That's always a bad sign.

I turned back to Joyce and got her to pull her gaze down. "It looks like we're going to have company in a minute. Maybe you'd better coach me on how to act."

"You don't know him?"

"No. Should I?"

"It's Ward Cherry."

Well, that answered a lot of questions that I hadn't got around to asking yet—

questions that I might not get to ask at all if I was destined for a run-in with Ward Cherry. I'd never seen him before, but I had heard the name enough. You can't be connected with the law for long and not hear about one of the top hands on the other side. According to the grapevine that I use, he was a good man to stay away from if you happen to be the kind of person that likes to plan your future. Ward Cherry and that .45 of his were supposed to be the best pair of future wreckers in the country.

But that wasn't the thing that interested me then. I began to remember other things that I had heard on the grapevine, things that the Old Man in El Paso had forgotten to tell me, probably because he had a hunch that I wouldn't have taken the job if I had known that I was going to be working *with* a girl and *against* Ward Cherry. The hunch would probably have been right. Anyway, I began to see a reason for Joyce Muller's being here. Cherry had been on the scene when the kid was killed, so the story went. He hadn't done it himself, though. He had been filling inside straights in a saloon with a half a hundred people around when the bushwhacking took place . . . Well, that was something I could work on later. By this time Ward Cherry had made his way back to our table and was breathing in my face.



HE WASN'T quite sure just what he ought to do with me. Maybe he'd just step on me like a bug that had got under his heel, and let it go at that. Or maybe he would give me an object lesson in what you could expect when you staked out on other people's property, because it was clear now what the bartender had meant when he said Joyce was "took." I watched him move the idea around like a bulldog worrying a bone. He liked it. Ward Cherry wasn't very fast upstairs, but when he finally got hold of an idea he wanted to do something with it. A big hand came out, wadded the front of my shirt and lifted me out of the chair.

"You got the wrong table, stranger. Get out before something flies up and hits you."

I didn't like being picked up by my

shirtfront and getting told off. For a guy standing six feet and weighing a hundred and eighty pounds it doesn't happen often enough for him to get used to it. Maybe that was the reason I did what I did—that and a long practice of doing the wrong thing at the wrong time. I got enough leverage to slam him across the wrist where it hurts. He let out a yelp and pumped back, holding his arm like he was ruined for life.

I made another mistake then. I tried to rub it in. I said, "Keep your hands off me, you rustling so-and-so or somebody's going to get their back broken." Rustling was just a word that sneaked in while I wasn't thinking, one of those words that you grab for when you're hot and usually winds you up under a doctor's care, if it doesn't get you stretched out in an undertaking parlor. An unhappy choice. I might have walked out under my own steam before I said it, but now Cherry wasn't going to be satisfied with anything less than blood.

Maybe I was hitting too close to home with that rustling crack. It didn't make any difference. Those little black eyes of his were yelling kill, and the only thing he hadn't decided on was whether to do it with his gun or his bare hands. I helped him make up his mind. I stepped in and hit him as hard as I could in the face.

That surprised him. His head jerked back and blood welled up at the corner of his mouth and started dripping. I said, "All right, are you going to do something about it or just stand there and bleed on the floor?" One more mistake couldn't hurt anything now.

He did something about it. He grinned. He was already seeing me stretched out cold and white, filling a pine box with my arms crossed on my chest, sleeping the long sleep. They could get the boys with the shovels started for Boothill.

He stormed in and smashed me on the cheek with a sledgehammer fist before I got set. I couldn't have got set for a punch like that, anyway. It exploded in my face and my head snapped back like somebody folding a pair of pants across the back of a chair, and I started grabbing for something to hold to. There wasn't anything. I went down.

I felt my knees bang the floor and I knelt

there and shook my head. Hollow as an October gourd. But it knew when the big boot came out of nowhere and slammed in my stomach and sent me rolling and spewing across the saloon. I finally banged into a table and rolled to a stop.

I was ready for him this time, as ready as you can get for two hundred pounds of wrecking machinery. I managed to ride with the next swing without getting hurt too much. Then I jerked my knee up and let it explode in his groin and watched his face turn green. That surprised him, too. I guess he figured that I came from some place where they don't play like that. Just to show him how wrong he was I tried to break his neck with a rabbit punch while he was still sick from the kneeling.

I didn't break it, but he went down. I had him where I could kick him now and give him some of his own medicine. But I don't like to kick a man when he's down. He might grab your boot and pull you down with him. The hell with it. I kicked him anyway.

Then I stood back and we both wheezed like wrecked locomotives. I felt pretty good about it, in spite of a cracked head and some ribs that I wasn't sure about. I had spotted him twenty pounds and an inch in the air and I was ahead. I'd won the first round, anyway.



THERE weren't many people in the saloon now. The girls and most of the men had made a run for the back door. The two punchers were watching with their mouths open from the back of the place, and the bartender was still taking bottles off the back bar. The second round was about to start.

Cherry got to his knees and panted. I panted. From the look in his eyes I could tell he was thinking about going for his gun. But I had him at a disadvantage and he decided against it—anyway, I guess he wanted to finish this thing the way it started, as a fist fight. He reached down very carefully and unbuckled his gunbelt and let the .45 drop to the floor. I almost liked him for that. My knees were weak and my gun was heavy. I took it off and flung it over to the table where Joyce was frozen.

It occurred to me then that maybe

Cherry was the kind of man to carry a hide-out, a little derringer stuck away in his vest pocket that he could use to settle arguments like this. Now was a fine time to think about that, after I had thrown my gun away. I wouldn't have had any more chance than Jeff Muller had had against a derringer.

But Cherry didn't have one. He didn't need one. When he got up from the floor he looked strong. I don't know how I looked, but I felt like I had been undermined by termites, like a hollow tree that looks fine until you touch it and it falls down. And he had that grin back and I knew this was going to be one of those days when it doesn't pay to get out of bed.

He came in fast this time like he had never been hurt. I tried to get out of the way, but I couldn't make it. I took a fist in the gut and he cuffed me to one side and sunk that right in again. The world got to be a sick place to live in. I staggered back and tried to kill time until I could get my stomach out of my throat. Then Cherry got careless and let his guard down and I smashed him twice in the face. That evened things up a little. But I still didn't know how the score stood. Then Cherry came in again and we slugged.

Time passed. A couple of seconds maybe. Or a couple of years. Two animals standing on their hind legs hammering each other. I wasn't even sure what we were fighting about. It hadn't been very clear in the beginning. And now nothing was very clear. Just fists, and elbows, and bruises, and shocks, and pain, and blood.

Then Cherry was down again. I don't know how he got there, I didn't remember hitting him hard enough to bring him down. But he was down. Crashed in the the midst of the wreckage, on his back, waving his arms and legs in the air like a fat bug too lazy to turn over. I should have done something then to end it, like picking up a table and bashing his skull in. I didn't think of it. There was the important business of getting air into my wheezing lungs.

Maybe Cherry wasn't the shrewdest thinker in the world, but he knew what to do with a table leg when he saw one. He jerked one loose and got himself off the

floor with a purpose. He still had his grin, and he still had that vision of me stretched out on an undertaker's slab. I could almost see it myself. And I didn't like it.

The first swing he took would have done it, if he had connected, but he didn't. My foot took a mind of its own and kicked a table over, the one that was still standing, and crashed it across Cherry's legs. He got tangled up. His balance was shot all to hell and he went down again. He didn't stay down, but it gave me time to kick the table leg out of his hand. And it gave me time to get a knee under his chin before he got all the way off the floor, and when the two came together it was over. A knee is a tough piece of fighting equipment. When you explode one on somebody's chin they're through. Even Cherry. Or anybody else. Try it sometime.

I found a piece of a table and leaned against it and puffed. I was through too. I couldn't chin myself on the bar's brass foot rail. I needed a drink, but it seemed too far to walk. I needed a smoke, but I didn't think I could lift a cigarette with a well-digger's hoist. I just propped myself up and wheezed. Ward Cherry didn't do anything.

The bartender started putting the bottles back up. I guessed he figured the disturbance was over. I hoped he was right. I couldn't get out of the way of a low-geared glacier. My knees began to tremble and somebody pushed a chair under me and I dropped. It was Joyce Muller.

"Wes . . . Are you hurt?"

I liked the way she said Wes. I liked the way she looked at me with concern in her eyes.

"I have a place upstairs," she said. "Do you think you can make it up there? Your face needs attending to."

I nodded. She helped me out of the chair and we waded across the littered floor and started the long climb to the top of the saloon. Halfway up I looked back to see how the people were taking it. The two punchers were staring at Ward Cherry in wonderment. Their mouths were still open. The bartender was busy with his bottles, and a couple of the saloon girls carefully stuck their heads in at the back door, like an amateur animal trainer putting his head in a lion's mouth.

CHAPTER II

A JOB WITH THE LAZY S



THE room wasn't much, but it had a chair to sit in. It had a bed too, but that was on the far side of the room and I wasn't sure if I could make it. I used the chair. Joyce poured some water into a bowl, soaked a towel in it and then went to work on my face.

She said, "Do you always do things the hard way? You didn't have to fight him. He would have been satisfied if you had given up and walked out."

I said, "I need a drink."

She brought me some water, which wasn't what I had meant.

"He'll try to kill you for what you did down there."

I knew that. And the next time he wouldn't try to do it with his fists. It wasn't a pleasant prospect, knowing that I was going to have a man like Ward Cherry on my tail. But I had too many aches and pains to let it bother me now. I relaxed while she went over my face some more. I began to feel better. Before long I began to feel like a man again—a man with troubles and a lot of things to worry about. I ran my tongue around on the inside of my mouth. It felt like a beefsteak that Jack The Ripper had cut off with a dull ax.

I said, "Now that I've started the job off with getting my brains beat out, maybe you'd better tell me what I'm working on."

She finished the patch-up job and stood back to appraise it.

"I suppose you have figured it out by now that Ward has put a claim on me," she said finally. "That was the idea when I came to Corinto. When my brother was killed he was investigating some rustling up north, some very smooth rustlers who were organized and had the business worked out to a science. Jeff figured Ward Cherry was in on it—maybe the right-hand man, or the chief gunman—but not at the head because there was too much brain work behind it."

Maybe my own head was still a little soft from that pounding it had taken. I didn't get it. I said, "Does that suppose to

explain why you hired out as a detective and came to Corinto to make eyes at a gunman?"

She didn't seem to hear me. "Too much brain work," she said again, patiently. "Whoever the boss was, he had a mania for staying out of the picture. Nobody has any idea who he is, or what he looks like. But Jeff must have found out—or had a hunch anyway who he was. That's the reason the boss killed him."

I said, "Don't you think a boss rustler would have one of his gunmen to do a job like that?"

"There are some jobs a man wants to do himself," she said. "Maybe he didn't want anybody to know about it, not even Cherry."

I waited. I figured sooner or later she would get around to telling me what she was doing here. What I was doing here.

"After the killing," she said, "the gang knew the place would be swarming with stock detectives so they broke up. For good, it looked like. About six months ago the Association began to get complaints about rustling here in Corinto—not very smooth work, no brains to speak of behind it, so they sent a couple of men down to take care of it. But about that time things took a change. The ranchers began to complain that they were losing cattle like they were dissolving in thin air. There had been the same complaints when the gang had been operating up north. Then the El Paso office found out that Cherry was in Corinto and I talked them into letting me work on him."

"The Old Man ought to have his head examined. What makes you think our boss rustler here is the same man that killed Jeff? Maybe Cherry got himself a new boss."

She shook her head. "He wouldn't want Cherry out of his sight for long. Cherry is probably the only man who knows who he is." She seemed about through. Then she added, "It was a mistake starting that fight. Cherry was my only link with the man who killed my brother."

I was the guy who could write a book about the mistake it had been. But I didn't feel like doing it now. I said, "You could whistle and he would come running back. I would."

She blushed. Up until now she had been very businesslike about it, but now a slow red began to creep up and heat her cheeks.

"Who is the biggest loser among the ranchers?" I said.

She thought about it. "Martin Reeve. His Lazy S outfit is the biggest around here. He was the one who wrote the Association when the trouble first started here."

"Well, I'll see Reeve then. I ought to have some excuse for being in this part of the country. Maybe he'll put me on as a rider."

I got up from the chair. I was already beginning to get stiff, but it would be worse tomorrow. I wondered how Ward Cherry felt. Joyce Muller went over to the door with me and opened it.

"Are you going to be all right?"

"Sure. Until Cherry wakes up and thinks up something to happen to me."

We stood there for a few seconds looking at each other. I wanted to tell her to get out of here before she got hurt. Playing with Cherry was like teaming up with a firebug in a powder plant, you never knew when the whole business was going to blow up in your face. But I didn't try to talk her out of it. I could see it wouldn't be any use. I guess I would have been the same way, if I had been in her place, and the kid had been my brother. I said, "When you see Cherry again tell him it was all a horrible mistake and I'm anxious to be buddies again." Then I hobbled downstairs to what was left of the saloon.



IT WASN'T in such bad shape after all. The bartender had dragged in some more furniture and set it up. I guess experience had taught him to keep some extra stuff on hand for times like this. The place was getting a good play, too, from people dropping in to see what all the fuss was about. So the bartender didn't try to have me arrested when I came down. He even seemed glad to see me.

I leaned over the bar and said, "Give me a double."

The bartender grinned. "You look like you need it." He got a bottle and a water glass and set them on the bar. "Mister, help yourself, it's on the house. I've been

waiting a long time to see somebody take care of Ward Cherry, but I didn't think I'd ever see it. I sure didn't think I'd see it today."

I poured myself a finger of whiskey, measuring from the top of the glass, and downed it. "Thanks. I had some doubts of my own. Where did he go?"

"They dragged him out, stiff as a raw-hide shirt."

About that time four men came in through the front door and stopped up at the end of the bar and motioned to the bartender. The bartender began to get that "I-feel-sorry-for-you" look again and pulled my .45 and belt from under the bar and handed it to me.

"I wouldn't let this get too far away if I was you," he said under his breath. Then he went up to wait on his customers.

I was buckling my gun on and wondering if I ought to take some more of the bartender's whiskey while he was in a generous mood, when two more men came in. One of them was a fat man with the brutish look of an inbred bulldog, except there wasn't as much intelligence in his eyes. But he had a star pinned on his vest and that made it all right. He came in red-faced and puffing and wanting to know what the hell all the racket was about. He was a little late I thought, but then, this was apt to be the kind of town that sheriffs were always late in. I used some more of the whiskey while the bartender directed him down to me.

He steamed down to where I was and blew his breath in my face. The sheriff favored rye.

"So you're the one that started all this!" he bellowed. "Well, by God we're not going to have it, you hear me?"

I heard him, all right, but the question didn't seem to merit much of an answer. I turned to the man beside him and said. "If he's got a gripe to make, maybe you'd better tell me about it."

The sheriff almost choked, but the other man grinned. He patted the lawkeeper on the back and said, "It looks all right now, Jess. You don't want to make any arrests, do you?"

That quieted the fat man down. He scowled and blew some more rye in my face, but he didn't bellow any more. Finally he grunted, "Well, all right. Whatever

you think, Mr. Reeve." He turned and steamed back toward the front door, but not very fast. Most of his pressure had leaked out.

I said, "This looks like a town where it pays to know somebody."

That got me a grin, a nice, pleasant grin from a face that had seen a lot of sun, and eyes that had seen a lot of things. The eyes looked a little worried. If he was who I thought he was, Martin Reeve of the heavy-losing Lazy S, then they had a right to be worried. He said, "Jess is all right, but he's not used to having much trouble. And that's one thing we've been getting plenty of around here. Trouble."

I nodded, as if it didn't mean anything to me but I was trying to act as if it did.

"You did the town a big favor, you know," he went on. "Cherry has been looking for trouble for a long time, but nobody around here was very anxious to help him find it." He seemed to think about something for a few seconds. "You should have used a gun, though. He'll be gunning for you unless you get out of town in a hurry."

"I thought I'd like to stick around for a while," I said. "Get a job maybe."

He looked at me as if I had suddenly sprouted a green mustache. And then he let out a laugh, a low, deep-throated chuckle of amazement. "Well, I'll be damned. You're the man from the Stock Raisers' Association."

I hadn't been ready for that one. It hit me where it hurt, right in the middle of my pride. A stock detective likes to think that he looks just like anybody else—he has to look that way if he wants to hold a job. I might as well take out my identification papers and pin them on my vest for all the good I was doing at fooling somebody.

I said, "I'm sorry. I didn't think it showed."

He laughed again. "Oh, it wasn't that. The Association wrote me that they were sending a man down to take care of the rustling situation. I'm Martin Reeve." He stuck out his hand and we shook. "We don't get many strangers here in Corinto, so I kind of put two and two together. Well, you started off on the right man when you tackled Ward Cherry."

I said, "Now that you know who I am,

I'd like to talk to you, Mr. Reeve—that is if you don't mind taking sides against Cherry."

"I don't mind," he said. He sounded like he meant it. Some curious eyes followed us as we took the bottle and found a table, but nobody that looked like they wanted to start anything. Not even the four men up at the end of the bar. Reeve noticed me looking at them and he dropped his voice a notch.

"Cherry's men. He's got several of them that make this their headquarters."

I nodded and said, "Do you want to tell me the rest of it, starting at the first?"

He did, but there wasn't much to tell that I didn't already know. Mr. Reeve had come from around San Antonio where he had a small spread. Then he bought out the Lazy S, which had just been cleaned out by the same disease that plagued it now—rustlers. It seemed like everybody had Cherry pegged for the job as top hand for the brand-splotchers, although some of them thought it was funny that the technique took a sudden change.

"Well," I said, "from the looks of things it seems like Cherry's our man all right."

"But you think he might have a boss," Reeve said.

I shrugged. "I'm here to try to find out. If you'll put me on as a Lazy S rider I'll see what I can do about it."

He said sure, and I had a job, and we got up to leave. Things had pretty well quieted down in the saloon by that time. Most of the excitement was gone now, and the faces that were left were mostly serious ones, like they were making book with themselves on whether I would live another day. I couldn't tell what the odds were. Reeve and I went outside and down to the livery stable where our horses were, and then headed for Lazy S.

CHAPTER III

BLOOD AND SAWDUST



THE country around Corinto was like most grazing country, a lot of dry grass and red dust, and jackrabbits and prairie dogs, and greasewood and scrub oak. That was about it. Good for raising cattle, but

that was about all. Not even that with rustlers with their hands in things. Reeve and I jogged along and thought our own private thoughts and watched the sun blow up big and red in the west. Pretty soon it would be gone and night would be here and it would be time for me to count up and see what I had accomplished for the day.

It wouldn't come to much. A headache and some bruised ribs and a great variety of cuts and bumps and knots and just sore places in general. And a kind of emptiness where my stomach ought to be. That would come from knowing that Ward Cherry would be out to settle things before long. That was about all I had managed to gather in for the day. That, and a lot of questions that I didn't have any answers for.

And there was Joyce Muller. I knew I'd be getting around to her before long, and wondering what she was doing back there in the saloon. I was wondering if Ward Cherry was back yet. I figured he was. Cherry wouldn't be able to stay away from her for long. I told myself it was all right. That was what he wanted, and maybe Joyce would be able to get some information out of him. I told myself that, but I didn't like it.

The Lazy S was about five miles from town and looked like it had the makings of a good outfit. There was the ranch house, the usual squat affair of rock and sod and a few logs, a little bigger than most ranch houses. The corrals and barns and bunkhouses were at the back, and behind them was a drooping, disconnected string of willows or salt cedar that I guessed was a creek. The sun was gone now. I just had the afterglow to see by, but it looked like a pretty good set-up.

We rode the horses around to the back and a wrangler came out and took them to a barn for the night. We headed for the house then and Reeve said, "Well, this is the Lazy S. What do you think about it?"

I told him it looked all right, it seemed to have everything a cattle ranch ought to have.

"It would seem that way," Reeve said. "I thought I was getting a bargain when I bought the place, but now I'm not so sure. Off to the west the country starts to

break up pretty bad. You get a lot of hills and canyons. We call it the Badlands around here, and I guess that's what it is because sooner or later our cattle all seem to head in that direction."

"Is that where the rustlers hang out?" I asked him.

"It could be," he said, "but nobody knows for sure, except the rustlers, of course. Like I say, it's pretty bad country, and nobody's very anxious to go in and see. Some have tried it, but they didn't come back."

"Just how do these boys operate?" I said. "These badlands, they must be a pretty good way from here. How do they get the cattle there from their home range?"

By fixing our attention on something else mostly. Everything from grass fires to dances in town. When we're short of hands that's when they hit." I guess he anticipated my next two questions—anyway, he answered them before I got them out. "We've got together several times, the ranchers around Corinto, to try to fool them. Fake a big dance in town or something. But it never works. Whoever the boss rustler is, seems like he knows what we're going to do before we do. And as for the law doing something about it—" He laughed. "Well, you saw Jess."

I said "Yeah," and he opened the back door to the ranch house and let me in. The first room we hit was my favorite, as it is with everybody, I guess, except the women that take care of them maybe. The kitchen. There was a woman in it, bending over the cook stove looking at something that I guessed was roast beef. The room was heavy with the thick smell of it. When she looked up I saw that she was a woman about forty whose hair was already gray and whose smile was more habit than any kind of expression. Her eyes were tired. All ranch wives' eyes are tired, I guess. She straightened up and smiled that lonesome kind of smile and didn't seem very surprised to see that she had company.

"Oh," she said, "it's you, Martin."

Reeve had the stock answer to that one, then he kissed her on the cheek and introduced me to his wife. After she had wiped her hands on her apron we shook and I told her how nice it was to meet her.

"Mr. Baily will be riding with us here at the Lazy S," Reeve said.

She smiled and said that was nice, then she hurried back to the stove before something burned.

We went into the front room then where a man sat under an oil lamp looking thoughtfully at a book. He was a youngish man who turned out to be just a kid after I had looked at him for a few seconds. Twenty-one or -two maybe. A serious-faced kind of kid that looked like he didn't talk much but did a lot of thinking. It was his size that fooled me. He was as big as Ward Cherry. Maybe bigger. Around El Paso I was considered a big man, but I was beginning to get a midget's inferiority complex around here.

Martin Reeve said, "Baily, this is my son, Julian," and the young man stood up. We shook hands and said the usual things and sized each other up.

"Baily will be with us for a while," Reeve said. "I hired him today."

Then things started to happen. "Another rider?"

Reeve said, "Another rider."

"We need another rider like we need a plague of hoof and mouth disease. You ought to know that."

"He has some ideas on the rustling."

"Who hasn't?"

It looked like it was going to be a wrestling match if somebody didn't step in and explain things. It didn't look like Reeve was going to, so I did. "I'm from the Stock Raisers' Association," I said. "I thought I could get a better idea of what's going on if your father put me on as a rider, kind of on the quiet."

That eased things a little. Maybe I was making a mistake by advertising who I was, but by now I had got the idea that Martin Reeve and his son weren't on the best of terms, and I didn't want to make things worse by my being there.

Julian Reeve said "Oh," and then he unwound himself. "I'm sorry, Baily, it's just that we've lost so many cattle that we're going to have to let our old riders go pretty soon if something doesn't happen. All the ranchers will, for that matter."

I said that was all right, and then Mrs. Reeve came in and said supper was ready and everybody was friends again.



IT WASN'T until the next day that complications set in. It didn't make the mess any nicer to handle, but it gave me an idea what was wrong between Martin Reeve and his son, and I picked up a strong hunch that Joyce Muller had more than one reason for staying in Corinto. I didn't like it, especially the part about Joyce, but there wasn't anything I could do.

It all started while the sun was coming up after breakfast, and a new shift of riders was headed north to relieve the ones at the line camp, and some more riders going out to take care of what was left of the Lazy S herd. I was out at the barn and thinking I might take a ride over to the west and maybe pick up a clue, or a hole in the head, or something. Martin Reeve was with me trying to talk me out of it.

"It won't do any good," he was saying. "If you go far enough to see anything you won't come back. Either that, or they'll clean us out while you're away."

He just about had me convinced. I wasn't very anxious to let myself in for a case of bushwhacking. I rolled a cigarette and thought about it and watched Julian

Reeve come toward us from the bunkhouse. When he got close enough for me to get a good look at his face I felt it creeping up on me that this was going to be another one of those days. He had the face of a thinker, kind of screwed up around the forehead and a faraway look at the back of his eyes. I didn't want to hear what he was thinking now. But I was going to.

He stopped in front of me and said. "So you're the one that had the fight with Ward Cherry in the saloon yesterday?"

Somewhere between sundown and sun-up we had stopped being friends, but I didn't know why. I said, "I guess so. One of them, anyway." I wondered where he thought I got this face. Something I picked up to scare kids with, maybe.

Martin Reeve tried to stop him then, but the kid wasn't going to be stopped. He moved a little closer and glared.

"Stay away from her, Baily. You did enough yesterday, fighting over her like she was a common saloon girl. I ought to beat your head in for that, and I will if you touch her again."

I haven't lived so long that nothing jars me any more. That jarred me. At first I didn't know what he was talking about, but after thinking it over a couple



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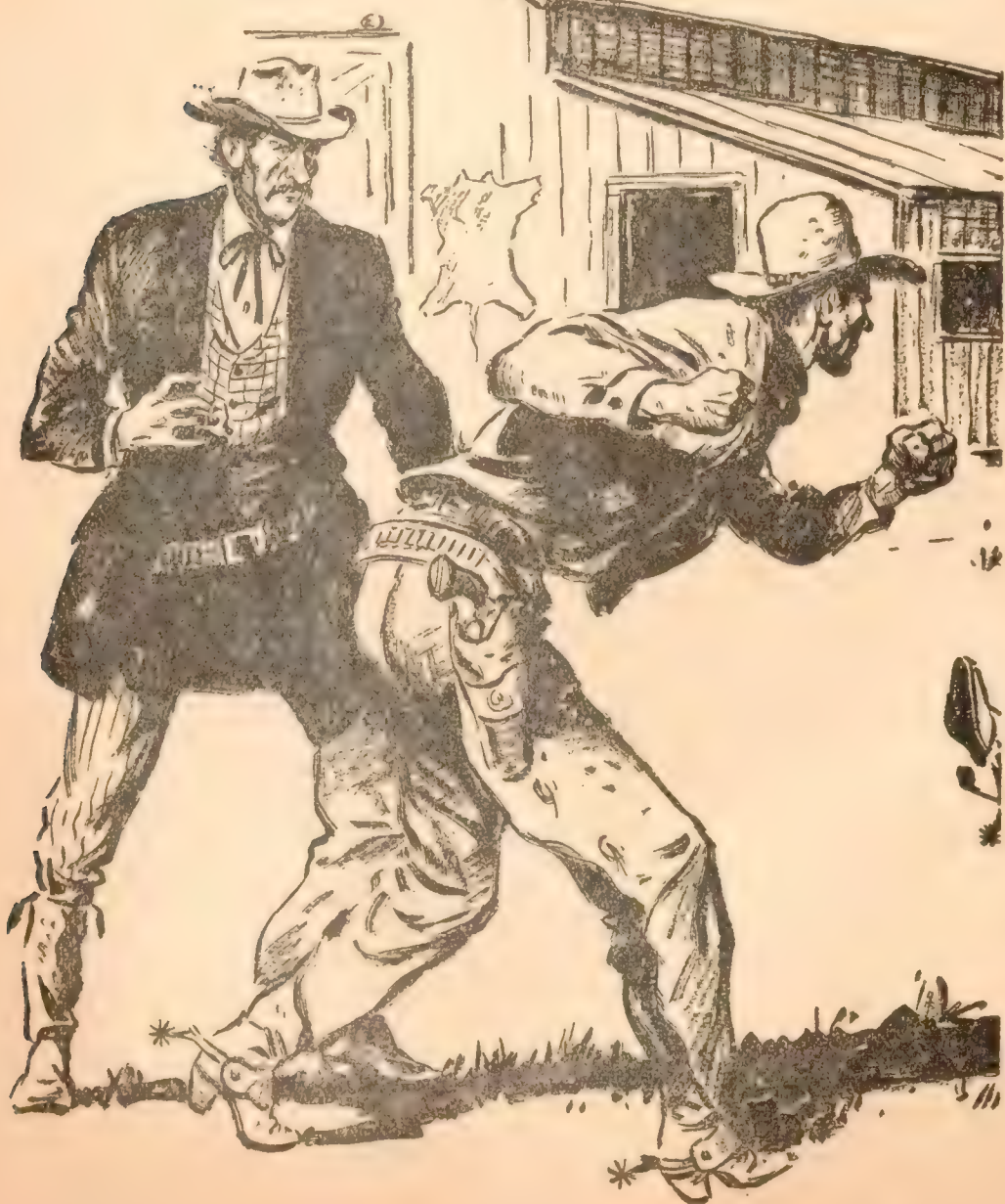
of seconds I figured he must mean Joyce Muller. Joyce was doing all right for herself. I'd met three men in Corinto and two of them were crazy about her. That was a good average. I could make it even better if I wanted to count myself.

I said, "Don't you think you're jumping at conclusions? I wasn't fighting over

anybody. I just made the mistake of fighting *with* Ward Cherry."

He wasn't convinced. I guessed that one of the punchers that had been in the saloon was a Lazy S man, and that was where the kid got his information. Sometimes punchers lay it on pretty heavy about things like this. That one sure had.

He had it bad, all right. Anybody who could take a look at Joyce and say she wasn't a saloon girl had to have it bad.



She had fooled me without any trouble. That brought up another question. Maybe Joyce had told him that she was working for the Association. I didn't think she was that big a fool, but I had to find out.

I said, "Just what makes you think she *isn't* a common saloon girl?"

I found out the hard way. A fist the size of a country ham slammed the side of my face, and while I was listening to my head ring that fist loomed up again and exploded.

I tasted blood. I had tasted blood before this and I didn't care for it much. They turned the lights out then and I started

falling that long fall where you never seem to hit the bottom.

I woke up finally, with Martin Reeve kneeling beside me and grinning that quiet grin of his with no humor in it. He helped me to my knees and I wobbled my jaw around to see if it was hinged right.

"You don't need a detective," I grunted. "Just harness some of your son's power and hitch it to the right places. That's all."

Reeve said, "Yeah, that's all." He sounded tired. I could see why, with a son like that. He got me to my feet and I began to get a better focus on things. We seemed to be alone.



A fist the size of a country ham slammed the side of my face, and while I was listening to my head ring that fist loomed up again and exploded.

"Julian headed for town about five minutes ago," Reeve said, "I couldn't stop him."

"I'm glad," I said. I rubbed my jaw some more and the numbness went away and a dull throbbing took its place. "Maybe you'd better tell me what I said that was so wrong. I don't want to make a mistake like that twice."

Reeve thought about it and dug way back into his memory. It looked like it was going to be a long story. I scratched up a little pile of hay and sat down again.

"It doesn't tie up with the rustling anywhere," Reeve said finally. "Unless Julian and Ward Cherry being in love with the same saloon girl would do it."

I began to know how Julian had felt now. I had the urge to hit somebody too, when I heard her called by that name. But I tried not to let it show.

"But it all starts before that," Reeve said. "Julian has always been kind of—well, impetuous. Even as a kid he knew what he wanted and there was no stopping him. We used to have a lot of misunderstandings, and finally I gave him money to go to a University back east because we weren't getting along very well at home. He has a turn for that sort of thing. Learning, I mean. He used to read books a lot, so I thought school would be a good place for him."

"For a thinker," I said, "he does pretty good when it comes to action." That got me that tired grin again, and Reeve went on.

"Anyway, he went back east. We didn't hear from him for four years. He finally came back home a few months ago, here to Corinto, and we learned that he hadn't been to school at all. Went to China, he said. A lot of other places, too, but I guess he finally got tired of that, so he came back . . ."

He left the words hanging there. "So now you hardly recognize him as your son," I said. "Is that it?"

"Something like that, I guess. He got into trouble with Ward Cherry when that saloon girl came to town the other day. He says he's going to kill Cherry—but," he added hopelessly, "it will probably be the other way around."

I had been wondering about that—how Julian was taking it about Joyce and

Cherry. Well, now I knew that, and I knew all the trials and tribulations of the Reeve family, but I still didn't know anything about the rustling that had brought me here in the first place. I got to my feet again. I didn't know what to say to Reeve about his son, so I forgot about it, which was probably what he intended for me to do.

I began to think I wanted to go to town. I thought I'd like to talk to Joyce again and see if she had been able to pump Cherry for a new angle. I'd like to talk to her about this Reeve kid that had just knocked my face in. I'd just like to talk to her.

Reeve didn't care for the idea. He said, "Cherry's going to be waiting for you. I can give you the protection of the Lazy S as long as you're on it, but if you go to town there won't be anything I can do."

I still had an idea that I wanted to go to town. Anyway, it seemed like a hell of a way to catch a murderer and a rustler, staying tucked away under the spread's protection and not even seeing anybody but the Reeve family. Come to think of it, this wasn't the healthiest place in the world either, not while Julian was apt to fly up and hit me at any minute. I went to town.



OVER the prairie and through the greasewood and scrub oak, talking to myself and the prairie dogs. It seemed like a long ride, but that was because my backbone tried to punch a hole in the top of my skull every time my horse put a hoof down. The sun was still on the right side of noon when we hit the town limits.

A dog came out and barked at us, then a dirty-faced kid came out and called us a bad name and dragged the dog back to a sod house. That was the reception we got. Nobody seemed to give a damn whether I came to town or not. Maybe they would be more interested in whether or not I left town. I'd have to wait and see.

It didn't occur to me to be canny about it. I could have come into the town the back way, ridden behind the buildings and got up to Joyce's room without anybody seeing me. What I did was hitch my

horse in front of the saloon and walk through the batwings.

I could have been just another handful of sawdust on the saloon floor for all the commotion I caused. There was a good crowd in the saloon but nobody was interested in me. They were all ganged up down at the far end of the bar, formed in kind of a circle, like a crowd watching a dogfight. But it was quiet. There was a heavy, sticky silence that seemed to ooze and muffle anything that might have been a sound. The kind of silence that usually means just one thing. I went down to see who was dead.

He was dead, all right. Shot once in the throat, right in the soft hollow above the V of his breastbone. Another shot had clipped the top off his skull and scrambled his brains and was making a hell of a mess on the floor. Dead, all right. I never saw anybody deader. He was sprawled on the floor with his eyes bulging, like eyes will do when you're shot in the head, and he looked like he'd just got the biggest surprise of his life. I guess he had. He never figured to go out like this. Not a

man of his size, and his reputation for gun throwing. But there he was, about six-feet-one of cold meat, getting colder all the time. All two-hundred pounds of it. Well, now I didn't have anything to fear from Ward Cherry.

I didn't notice Julian Reeve at first. I'm not much different from other people. The corpse held me with a morbid fascination, the same as it had the rest. Most of them solid citizens, pillars of society, storekeepers, businessmen, barbers, bakers. It had them all. They couldn't be bothered, they were too busy getting their full of blood and gore.

Finally I came out of it and began to notice other things. Julian Reeve mostly, standing there staring like the rest of them, with a tiny double-barreled derringer dangling from his fingers. Martin Reeve could stop worrying now, Junior wasn't going to get killed. The kid had talent. He had to be pretty good to shoot Ward Cherry twice with that derringer before the gunman could get his .45. But there might be some angles to it that I didn't know about, so I tried to set the situation

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up in my mind and figure out how it happened.

I noticed Joyce then, looking as pale and cold as a piece of ivory sculpture. I could see then how it happened. They had been sitting there at the table, Joyce and the Reeve kid, the same table Joyce and I had used the day before. An unlucky table for Ward Cherry. I guessed then that Cherry had come in up front and had put on the same kind of show I had seen yesterday. Up to a certain point, at least. When the slapping around started, then Julian Reeve took his toy gun out of his vest pocket and went to work. It had been a short job. But a good one.

The sheriff came in then, late as usual, puffing and getting ready to make a big racket. But the corpse stopped him. I guess it wouldn't have surprised him much if it had been anybody else—but Ward Cherry, that was something to think about. He wheezed and blew his rye breath around, and popped his eyes again when he saw young Reeve with the gun. This was going to be a delicate thing to handle. I gathered by now that Martin Reeve was a name to be reckoned with around Corinto, and a set-up like this was enough to confuse almost any man. It sure confused the sheriff.

But he came out of it finally and began to go to work with all the finesse of a night stampede. "All right, scatter out everybody." He saw me then and looked mad as hell because he couldn't pin it on me. He would have liked that. After he had thought over every other angle, he finally did what he had to do, took the little derringer out of Julian Reeve's hand. He held it away from him like he had a live snake by the head, and said, "Julian, I guess you'll have to come down to the office with me."

Young Reeve seemed to notice him for the first time. He looked at the sheriff levelly, like he was thinking about telling him to go to hell. But he didn't. He said, "Cherry started it. Anybody in the place can tell you."

"I know," the sheriff said peevishly. "But, damn it, we can't just let it go at that. Now come on."

Julian Reeve shrugged and decided he might as well. The sheriff went up toward the front doors first, Reeve following.

Well, with Cherry dead and Julian Reeve in jail, I could talk to Joyce without running the chance of getting my skull fractured. If she didn't have some admirers I didn't know about, that is. She looked like she was going to be sick if somebody didn't get her out of there, so I elected myself for the job.

I said, "Look, business isn't going to be worth a damn until they get this mess cleaned up. Why don't you go upstairs and rest and forget about it?"

She looked at me dumbly, like a steer that had just got the hammer in a slaughterhouse. I took hold of her arm and led her to the stairs and up. The crowd was still milling around below. The bartender was standing in the middle of the floor with his hands on his hips, staring at the corpse. If it wasn't one damn thing, it was another.

I got her upstairs all right, and into the room. She sat on the edge of the bed and stared at me in a funny sort of way.

"What's the matter?" I asked her, finally.

"You've got some more bruises."

"I've got some new bumps on my head, too. I'll let you feel them sometime, but now you'd better lie down."

She shook her head. "No . . . I'm all right." She sat up a little straighter to prove it. "What will they do with Julian?"

That was a nice touch, a guy that was crazy about her lying downstairs with a bullet in his brain and she's worried about the killer. Right then I wrote off Wes Baily's chances of ever getting anywhere with her. The way she spoke Julian's name, and the look in her eyes, and a thousand other little things told me that nobody else had a chance. I was finding out things all the time. Every little bit helps. Maybe in a thousand years or so I'd get around to finding out something about the rustlers. But I'd have to change my way of working if I did.

"They won't do anything with him," I said. "Cherry wasn't exactly an asset to the community. There won't be any tears spilled on his grave. Anyway, Julian's old man can throw some weight in the right places if he has to. Do you feel like talking about it?"

She did. It had come off just about the way I had figured it, except Cherry

hadn't made so much of a fuss before he caught the lead. I figured Julian still had his mad on when he got to town and Cherry just happened to show up at the wrong time. Or the right time, all depending which side you took.

I thought about it for a while and reassured Joyce again that nothing was going to happen to Julian. I wondered if I could get her to go back to El Paso, or wherever she came from, now that Cherry was dead and she didn't have anybody to work on. I didn't think I could so I saved my breath. I left her sitting there staring at the floor and not even looking up when I opened the door and closed it behind me.

CHAPTER IV

BLIND ALLEY



THE body was gone when I got downstairs. The bartender had just finished cleaning up the mess and looked pretty disgusted about it. When I went over to the bar he came back and shoved a bottle toward me.

"With four saloons in town," he said, "it looks like they could find some other place to bleed in once in a while."

I had my drink and sympathized with him and then asked him how it happened. It was the same story I had got from Joyce, told in a vocabulary that was made up mostly of four-letter words.

I said, "What will they do with young Reeve?"

He snorted. "Give him a medal, probably. Cherry's wanted killing for a long time."

"You think this is going to clear up the rustling situation?"

He gave me the kind of look that you usually reserve for backward children and the feeble-minded. "What do you think?"

I wasn't so sure what to think. I wasn't even sure I *could* think. So far, any resemblance thinking had to the muddling I had been doing was purely coincidental. I went outside and found my horse and started back to the Lazy S with the latest news.

As we hit the prairie and started across country I tried to add up the things I had.

First, there was a saloon girl who had a rustler and a rancher's son crazy about her. Only she wasn't a saloon girl. She was working for the Association. And we could cancel out the rustler now. So that left the saloon girl out of a job. Except that of making eyes at the rancher's son. I added that column up and got what I expected. Nothing.

Let's see, what else did we have? Oh, yes, a range detective that got clouted around by anybody that wanted to try. And we had Martin Reeve, the man who contacted the Association in the first place, and his wife who made good buttermilk biscuits. That column didn't come to much, either.

What else? Oh, the rustlers. I thought I was forgetting something. Let's see, who could we tie the rustling to, other than Ward Cherry? We could try to tie it to Julian Reeve. I thought I'd like that. Julian had been away from home for four years and nobody had heard from him. That was a good start. And it was kind of handy the way he showed up in Corinto about the time cattle began to disappear. Of course, he was pretty young for the job I was trying to fit him for, but he had brains, and that always makes up for a lot of things. He had guts too. Ward Cherry was on a slab right now to prove that.

There was a hitch, though. If Julian was my man, then he had just killed his own right-hand gunman. But Joyce Muller had had a slant on that one—she had said Cherry was probably the only one that knew who the boss rustler was. It was beginning to make sense. If I was guessing right, then Cherry had been carrying the kiss of death ever since he learned the boss's identity, and getting tangled with the boss's girl sort of pushed things along. Pushed Cherry right into Boot-hill.

The boss's girl . . . That was an angle that I'd kept tucked away in the back of my mind, but sooner or later I was going to have to take it out and look at it. What if Joyce was giving the Association the cross and was working with Julian? I didn't like to think about that.

There were other possibilities, too. Maybe Martin Reeve was my man. But why would he send an SOS to the Assoc-

iation? Anyway, he had had a spread near San Antonio. The hell with it. The first thing I knew I'd have Mrs. Reeve down for the job. Detective business. Maybe it was some John Doe that I hadn't heard about.

Or maybe Ward Cherry had been the brains after all.

But he hadn't been. We found that out three days later when one of the smaller ranchers came into town to sell out to anybody that would make an offer. He had just got his livestock whittled down to a milch cow and a pet goat, and he was ready to quit. It was the same story all over again, a grass fire at one end of the range while the cattle were driven off at the other. I might as well have been in South America for what I did to prevent it.

I had all my suspects around me now, but nobody offered to confess. Julian was out of jail like the bartender predicted, spending most of his time there in the saloon with Joyce. Martin Reeve didn't do much of anything, except take long rides and keep a nervous eye on his cattle. Me, I decided it was time to do something.

The only thing was, I didn't know what. I finally decided to move into town where things seemed to happen. I wasn't fooling anybody by staying on at the Lazy S, not anybody that counted, anyway. So I stuffed my things into my warbag and Martin Reeve went out to the corral with me to get my horse.

"It looks like you were right," Reeve was saying, "about there being somebody at the head of the rustlers. Have you got anybody pegged for the job?"

"Not yet," I lied. I didn't think Mr. Reeve would take kindly to my accusing his son, even if they weren't on very good terms. "Maybe I'll find out something in town. That's where Cherry's men hung out, and I haven't been able to do any good here."

He smiled wearily and helped me with the saddle.

"Well, maybe you're right, Baily," he said at last. "But I want you to know that you're welcome here any time you want to come back."

I thanked him and swung up and headed toward town.



I WAS getting to be a dependable customer at the saloon. When I walked in the bartender already had the bourbon set out for me.

I said, "Have you mopped up any blood lately?"

He shook his head and grinned. "Not lately." Then he glanced at one of the back tables and the grin came off. It was Julian Reeve and Joyce, there at the hard luck table. I decided to stay away from it. "But I'm not putting my mop away," the bartender went on, "until I see how you two come out."

I didn't say anything to that. I didn't like to think about it. The bartender said, "I seen you ride past the saloon a while ago. Looked like you was loaded. You cuttin' yourself out on the Lazy S job?"

I said, "They've got more cowboys than cattle. I thought I'd stay around town for a few days and see if I couldn't find something else."

He looked as if he didn't think I could, but it wasn't any of his business so he didn't argue about it. He watched me pour another drink and down it, then he froze. I felt something beside me. Something big. I turned and said, "Hello, Julian."

This wasn't one of Julian's friendly days. Maybe he didn't have any. He screwed his forehead up thoughtfully and fixed that level gaze of his somewhere around the bridge of my nose. "I saw you coming in from the ranch," he said finally. "That means you're leaving town?"

"No."

He thought about that and decided he didn't like it. "The rustling ended with Ward Cherry," he said. "The rest of the gang will break up and scatter. You haven't got any more business in Corinto."

"How about the cattle that disappeared yesterday?"

"Just a last raid to get what they could before they broke up."

"I don't think so. I think the head man's still in Corinto doing business."

"All right, Baily," he said. "If you want to stay in town, that's up to you. But I want to warn you, if you don't stay away from Joyce you'll end up like Cherry."

By the time I thought up the answer to that one I didn't have anybody to tell it to. Not even the bartender. He had melted away behind the bar somewhere, and Julian had wheeled and headed back to his table. I didn't like it much, but I didn't want to give the bartender another mess to clean up. Especially if the mess was me.

So I let him take that pot, and I left some money on the bar and walked out. I found a little hotel down at the end of the street where I rented a cigar box with a bed in it for six-bits. An idea started to cook in the back of my mind, but by the time I had thought about it, and washed my face, and changed shirts, it got cold. There didn't seem to be anything to do but keep an eye on Julian and hope he made a mistake. I was hoping it would happen pretty soon. My hands began to itch. I began to want to do something about that beating he had given me. I wanted to try, anyway.

When I left the hotel room Corinto had called it a day. It had its oil lamps going, just beginning to get over its after-supper sluggishness and catch its second wind. The sun had dropped suddenly the way the sun does here in the flat country, and now it was night and my stomach was telling me it was time to eat. I stepped outside on the boardwalk, looking straight ahead and not thinking much of anything. That was a mistake.

Two men closed in on me from the doorway of the hotel. Big men with slightly

familiar faces—like faces remembered in bad dreams. They moved silently and quickly, in a professional manner, and by the time they got through jostling me they had me shouldered into a little alleyway there beside the hotel.

Two more men came out of the dark alley, one of them taking up the position as watch there by the sidewalk, and the other one joining in on the jostling. I had an idea that all this wasn't working up to be just a cowboy's idea of fun, so I went for my .45. Somebody laughed. It wasn't me, because there wasn't any gun there; one of them had lifted it when the shoving first started. Professionals all right.

I said, "Look here." and that was all I said. Two of the men grabbed my arms and jammed my fists against the base of my skull while the third one went to work. He pulled on a leather glove first, pulled back a fist and let it fly in my face like a bomb going off.

I had them pegged then. They were the four men I had seen in the bar on that first day. Cherry's men. A lot of good the information was going to do now. He had a nice wallop, the big one on the business end of the glove. He snapped my head back with that first punch, and I felt my teeth wobble and I began to get that taste in my mouth, that warm salty taste that I had come to hate. But he was getting warmed up. Wait until he really got going and started with the fancy stuff.

He hit me again and grinned. I couldn't see his face there in the darkness, but he

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grinned. I'd bet on it. I started to go down. There was nothing I wanted to do as much as lay down and quit, but my two pals jerked on my arms and tried to tear them off at the shoulders.

They were pretty disappointed in me, I guess. They had figured to have a lot more fun before they finished it off, and here I was trying to black out after two punches. The boy with the glove held up for a minute and slapped me around just to wake me up. Still nobody said anything.

The slapping knocked some of the mud out of my head, but it didn't occur to me to yell. I probably couldn't have made a sound anyway. The boy with the glove chuckled. He was the one that had thought it was so funny when I had missed my gun. Reflex action took over from there. I kicked Laughing Boy as hard as I could. He gasped and made some sounds like he might get sick all over the place. I was sorry it was dark and I couldn't see his face turn green. I didn't like that boy.

I got a bad time from the ones holding my arms for that trick, but it was worth it. I would have tried it again if I had got the chance. But I didn't get it. Laughing Boy got over his sick spell and turned the world into a place of roaring pain. I didn't know what had hit me at first. Then I did. It was a gun barrel, a big, heavy barrel of a .45 right across the face. I began to get it then. This wasn't just another beating, just something to teach a guy with a curious nose to mind his own business. It was a killing. They didn't want to explode a cartridge because that would make too much noise and somebody might want to ask questions. Even in Corinto. So they were doing it the silent way, but just as sure, beating my skull in with a gun barrel.

I was scared. My guts crawled up into a hard little knot and ached. Somehow, I never figured to go out like this, being clubbed to death in a dark alley without a word being said. Then that piece of iron came in again and it didn't matter. Nothing mattered.



I WOKE up finally. That didn't surprise me. I expected to wake up some time, and I was hoping the other world would be better than the one I just left.

But it wasn't. The first thing I saw was just what I might have expected to see. That's what comes from being a range detective and putting off till tomorrow the promises of changing your ways.

He looked as big as a house, all blown up and muddy like a dead thing that had lain too long in the water. But he wasn't dead. He was standing over me with his legs spread and his thumbs hooked in his vest, staring down at me thoughtfully. I just lay there and looked at him and didn't think anything. Maybe that's the way it was here, you didn't have any thoughts of your own. I'd be right at home in such a place.

He said, "You try hard enough, Baily, but it looks like you'll never be popular here in Corinto."

I lay there and he said, "Get off the ground, you're not hurt. Not bad, anyway. I happened along and scared them away before they got down to serious business."

I wondered what he thought getting walloped with a gun barrel was, if it wasn't serious business. It was serious enough for me. But I tried to move just for the hell of it and found out that he was right, I wasn't hurt too bad. I had to breathe through my mouth, though, and that probably meant my nose was broken. One of my eyes wouldn't open, and my jaw was a little out of whack but it seemed to be in one piece. Just another chapter out of the Life and Love of a Range Detective. Just another day at the office.

I managed to get to my knees after a while. And then to my feet. I wobbled out of the alley and leaned against a wall and panted, while Julian Reeve stood there with his thumbs hooked in his vest looking at me.

"Somebody doesn't like you," he said. "You haven't been horning in on somebody else's girl, have you?"

I didn't know whether to thank him or try to hit him with something. Up until now I'd figured that Laughing Boy and the others had been some of Julian's hired hands, but now I wasn't sure about anything. If he wanted me out of the way, he had just kicked his best chance in the pants, and Julian didn't look like a boy that would pass up a good thing. Then who was Laughing Boy working for, if not

for Julian? I didn't know. But I was going to find out.

I left Julian standing there and hobbled back into the hotel. I made it up to my room and poured some water over my head and had a look in the mirror. I wouldn't ever win any beauty prizes, with my nose drifting off to the right side of my face and an eye the color of a ripe eggplant. But I'd live. For a few days, anyway. Long enough to find out something. I poured some more water on my head. Then I dug in my warbag and found a shirt that didn't have much blood on it, so I put it on.

I began to feel better. Not good, but I thought I'd be able to ride, and I wanted to get started before the stiffness set in. I had some new ideas to test out, the ones that Laughing Boy hadn't scrambled while he was knocking my skull in.

I found out from the hotel clerk where the nearest telegraph office was. It turned out to be a place called Wagnor, about a two-day ride to the south, so I got my horse out of the livery stable and that was the direction I headed.

CHAPTER V

MUZZLE SMOKE



IT TOOK two days in Wagnor for the Old Man to go through his records in El Paso and send me an answer. I didn't have a hell of a lot when I got it. But enough, I thought. Anyway, I took what I had and headed back for Corinto.

I guess the boys were surprised to see me come riding back into town. The rustlers must have been, because they had already got things to rolling and had made a couple of raids while I was away. I learned that from the bartender after I had checked in at the saloon. And I learned a couple of other things that jarred me.

Julian wasn't there, for one thing. He was out at the Lazy S laying flat on his back with two bullet holes in him, and Joyce was out there nursing him. A fine detective she was. If she kept on she would be in my class. When I found out how Julian got those bullets in him it looked like I had made a hell of a long ride for nothing.

I had the bartender pour me another drink while he told me about it. "Well," he said, "it looks like we've had the wrong man pegged for rustling job all along. Always figured Perry was the man. Guess he was one of them, but not the head one. Last Friday night they made a raid on the Circle J and the outfit's line riders jumped them. Killed one. Shot another one that turned out to be Julian Reeve. Reckon there'll be a hangin' around here before long." He grinned.

That scrambled things up good. If it was going to work out like this, I still didn't know who Laughing Boy and his buddies had been working for. I thanked the bartender, went outside and got my horse and pointed him in the direction of the Lazy S.

It seemed like a short ride, but maybe that was because I wasn't too eager to get there and find out the things I was afraid I was going to find out. The place looked deserted almost. There were a couple of strange horses hitched in front of the house. I guessed one of them belonged to the man sitting on the front porch; a fat, bewildered-looking man with a star on his vest. He held a knife in one hand and a stick in the other, but he looked too mixed up even to whittle. He stared with blank eyes as I hitched my horse and swung down. He got up finally, folded his knife and put it away.

"What're you doin' here?"

I wasn't quite sure myself, so I answered him with another question. "How's the Reeve kid, Sheriff? Was he hit pretty bad?"

"Yeah. Pretty bad. Doc says he don't know." The sheriff pulled out a dirty handkerchief and blew his nose. He looked like he might break down and cry. "It beats all," he moaned. "Who'd ever thought Julian 'ud turn out to be a rustler? There ain't a better family in Corinto. Beats all."

I agreed with him that it beat all.

"And now this . . ." He took out his handkerchief and honked again and I went into the house. The doctor came in from the bedroom wiping his hands and looking as if he had had a bad night. He didn't seem surprised to see me. Nothing would surprise him any more.

He said, "Yes?"

"I'm kind of a friend of Julian's. I'd like to talk to him if he's able."

The doctor shook his head. "I wouldn't advise it. He's lost a lot of blood and it's going to be a long pull."

"It's kind of important," I said. "I don't think Julian was in on the rustling. If I can talk to him now, maybe he can help clear himself."

The doctor looked at my face as if he thought I needed some medical attention myself. Finally he shrugged. "Well, all right. But not for long."

I thanked him and went into the room that he had come out of.

She was in there too, sitting beside the bed, staring hard at nothing. She didn't seem to notice me when I came in. She wasn't aware of anything, I guess, but Julian there, and the gnawing in her mind and wondering if he was the one who had killed her brother. Julian didn't do much of anything. He watched me absently with tired eyes and that was about all. Somehow he didn't look so big there on the bed. I went over and said, "You want to tell me about it, Julian?"

He didn't say anything. He didn't even blink.

"You might as well," I said. "I finally got on the right track by sending a wire to the El Paso office. I'll clear it up sooner or later whether you tell me or not. But it might save you from hanging."

"Go to hell, Baily." It was just a whisper, as weak as a preacher's curse. Joyce looked up then. There was bewilderment in her eyes as she looked at me and then at Julian. Then there was something else. Hope, maybe, as she stared at him.

"Julian, is there anything I don't know?"

That whisper again. "Get him out of here."

I wondered if I ought to hit him in the face with it. I didn't want to do it that way if I could help it, but maybe . . . The way it turned out, I didn't have to worry about it.

A voice behind me said, "I thought you had left us, Baily." I jumped.

It wasn't the voice that bothered me. It was the hard, round pressure pushed in the small of my back. It was just a little gun, a derringer maybe, but I didn't have to be told that it would kill if it went off.

I waited until I thought I could open my mouth without a screech coming out and said, "No, I'm back . . . Mr. Reeve."

I turned enough to get a look at him then. He was still smiling that same tired smile—it seemed to be the same one that I had seen about a week ago, but it had got a lot tireder since then. He had the gun in his coat pocket, and from the way he was standing there was no way anybody could tell that he was in a position to disconnect my backbone by pulling a trigger.

He said, "The doctor left orders that Julian wasn't to be disturbed. Would you like to come with me to my room?"

"All right, to your room," I said. I didn't seem to have much choice.



HE stayed behind me as we went through the front room, then he kicked a door open to what looked like an office and motioned me in. After we were closed in and he had taken his gun out to make it look more businesslike, he said, "I thought maybe you were going to be smart about it and leave Corinto for good. But it was just as well that you came back. I don't think I could have let you live anyway, with your unpleasant habit of prying into things."

I didn't say anything. I was wondering why he didn't take my gun. I was wondering how I was supposed to act now that I had a confession practically tossed in my lap. I didn't know. Whatever I did might be the wrong thing, with that gun pointing at my middle. It wasn't so much of a shock now, finding out that Reeve was my man. I could give the answers to "why?" in a lot of cases, or I thought I could. The thing that bothered me was that gun, that little derringer that was probably the same one that had killed Jeff Muller.

I said, "I just got back from Wagnor. They have a telegraph office there. I used it to wire the El Paso office and found out that you never had a spread around San Antonio."

He smiled. It was a sad smile, the smile of an old man who could see that he had reached the end of the road and he didn't care much. "Yes," he said. "I guessed that you would think of that. I

tried to get some of my boys to stop you. But it didn't work out."

That gun wavered as much as a mountain on a still day. Well, anyway, I knew now who Laughing Boy had been working for. A lot of good it was going to do me. But there was one thing I wanted to know. Even now, with a gun on me, he didn't look like the kind of man who would let his son hang for something he did himself. But I could be wrong. If I was, I wouldn't be starting something new.

I said, "As a matter of curiosity I'd like to know something before you let that gun go off. Why did you write the Association, if you were the one at the head of the rustling?"

He shrugged a little. "The other ranchers would have if I hadn't. I thought it would be better to have you where I could watch you."

"Do you think you can get away with killing me?"

"Maybe I can," he said quietly. "You still have your gun."

Well, I had the answer to that, anyway. As long as I had my gun he could plead self-defense and have a chance of making it stick. A man with his name would have a good chance. There didn't seem to be anything to do but stare at that gun and put the pieces together in my mind. I said, "I always set myself up as a kind of judge of human nature, but you're going to play hell with it if you let your son hang for doing nothing."

That seemed to take all the life out of him, what there was of it. I guess he had been thinking about that. He said, "I have influence. He won't hang." But he didn't sound very sure about it. Even if he got away with it, there would always be

the suspicion hanging over the kid, and I guess he had been thinking about that too. I asked some more questions, since he didn't seem to mind answering them. Why should he? I wasn't going to tell anybody. Anyway, things had shaped up pretty much the way I had guessed when the bartender told me about Julian getting shot.

Julian had suspected all along who was behind it. He had trailed the old man out to where the last raid had taken place to make sure, and there he was spotted as one of the rustlers and shot up by Circle J boys. Some of that must have been the reason he was so touchy about Joyce. The competition he was having was enough, but knowing what Joyce would think if she found out that his dad had killed her brother, I guess that had put a sharp edge on him. That probably explained why he had been so ready to kill Cherry, being afraid he would tell her. It also explained why he wanted me out of town. Julian's story wasn't much prettier than his old man's.

But at least he didn't do what people were ready to hang him for. And he didn't kill Jeff Muller. Joyce had a right to know that before it was too late.

I had it all worked out very neatly, but it wasn't doing me any good. All I could do was look at that little gun and wonder when it was going off. Then there was a knock at the door. Reeve's eyes jumped around in his head, but his gun didn't move.

"Who is it?"

A voice said, "Martin let me in." It was a tired voice. I never heard a tired one. It was the voice of a person who had given

(Continued on page 126)

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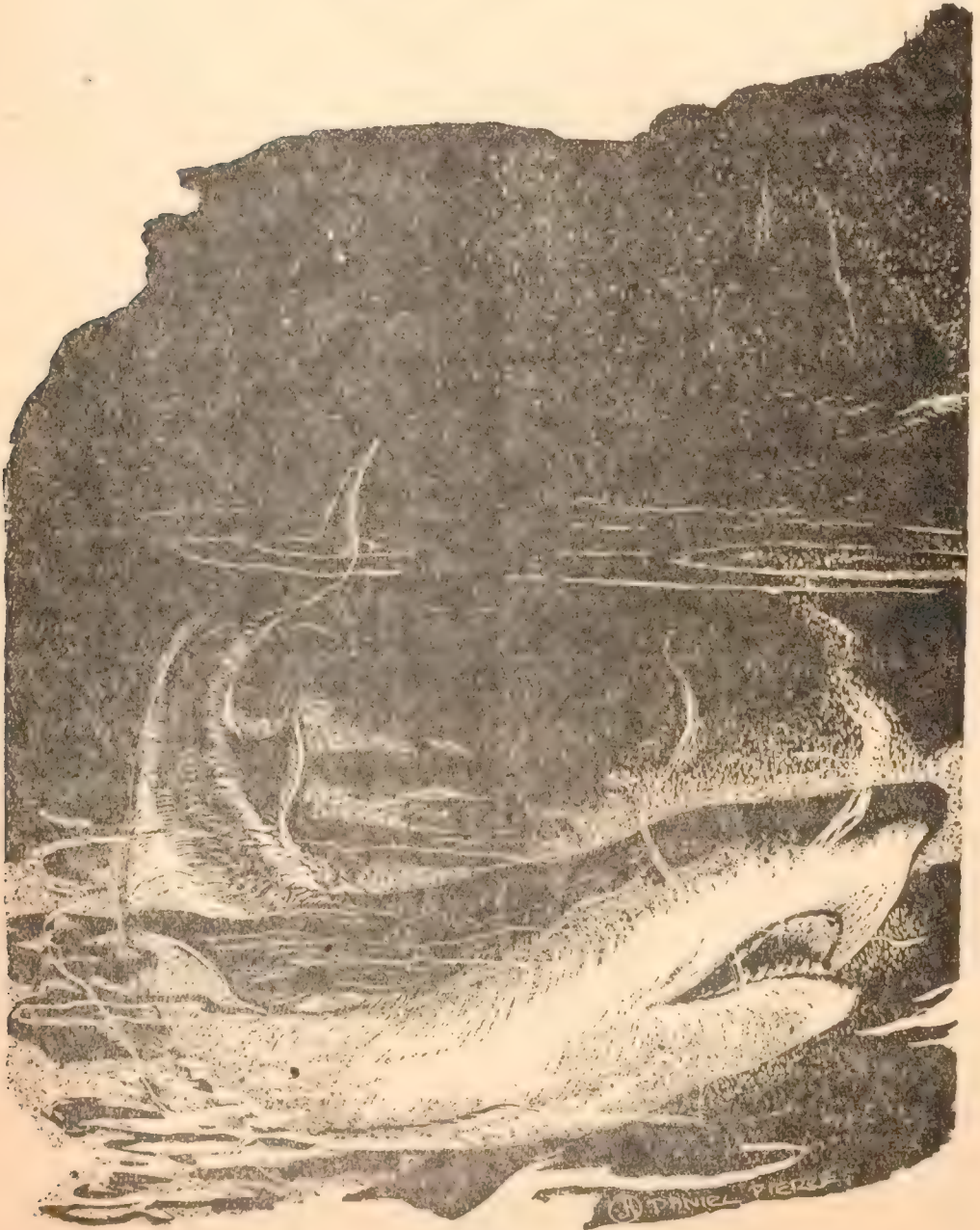
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By
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*He leapt back, his breath catching painfully in his throat.
There was something down there in the black depths!*



JOHNN TUTTLE had mysteriously disappeared! This was the startling news that greeted me upon my return to my island trading-post at Nukurua Atoll in the Tuamotu Group, following a month's vacation in Tahiti. To say that I was shocked is putting it mildly. I had met Tuttle several times at the Cercle Bougainville Club in Papeete, Tahiti, where the white traders met, and had found him a very pleasant and likable fellow. Violent happenings are customary in the isles of the far South Pacific, but they usually involve emotional disturbances associated with the shrieking force of the tempests that rip across the half-drowned archipelago of the Dangerous Isles (Tuamotu,) the deaths of pearl divers in the murderous maws of killer-

sharks, or the sinking of a schooner, blown off its course in a bad squall, whose keel had been ripped wide open, like a split watermelon, on a treacherous, razor-sharp spear-head of an uncharted, submerged coral reef. But the strange vanishment of a white trader is an alarming incident.

But the facts could not be disputed. John Tuttle, assistant trader at Hotu Atoll, had vanished, seemingly into thin air. In view of the fact that all the outrigger canoes and sailing craft at Hotu had been checked and rechecked, with none missing, and considering the actuality that no inter-island copra and pearling schooner had touched Hotu Atoll during the time of his disappearance, there was only one attitude to hold: John Tuttle

had been claimed by the sea. But had he gone drunkenly in for a swim and been attacked by a man-eater shark, or had he purposely gone beyond the reefs to his death, a *suicide*?

It was more than curiosity that compelled me to take passage on the next inter-island schooner that stopped by Hotu Isle, six hours' sailing south of Nukurua. I was positive that there must be a solution to Tuttle's eclipse. Sharks and other voracious fishes usually don't utterly consume an entire human carcass. Surely some member of the corpse would have been found floating in the lagoon or ocean. Yet the surface had been scoured by the natives in their outrigger canoes for a telltale sign. And I was anxious to learn the opinion of Tuttle's closest friend and partner, Ben Motts. Together these two men had built up, over a period of ten years, one of the finest trading stores in the Tuamotu Group. Their association had always been a perfect example of a Damon and Pythias friendship.



MOTTS met me on the coral jetty. I could see by his lined and haggard face how heavily grief rested upon him. He was a tall man with a massive head, large, deep-set melancholic eyes and a generous mouth, usually expanded in a friendly grin, but now compressed and tragic. His sadness was intense as I shook hands with him on the jetty.

It was apparent that no one in the entire world of islands was more shocked over John Tuttle's sudden vanishment and presumed death than Ben Motts. That his jovial partner could have dropped so abruptly out of sight without a warning cry, without a definite clue as to his untimely fate was eerie.

"I know you want to know what I make of this terrible thing," he said huskily, as we walked slowly up the palm-shaded coral strand to the trading-store, "but I'm actually quite in the dark. I haven't found a single clue that leads me to a definite conviction. I suppose you know what the natives are saying?"

I shook my head.

"They claim he fell under island witchcraft and was snatched away. *Pifao*, or evil-curse, they call it." Motts laughed

mirthlessly. "They'd have me believe he was taken away to the dark regions by the terrible *Varua-Te-Po*, Demon-Of-Darkness." He then related the visit of the investigating official from Fakarava Atoll, who, swayed by his half-Tuamotuan heritage, was sure that this was the solution. "But for the official record, he wrote to the colonial government in Papeete that John was drowned," Motts added somberly. "And perhaps that's the simplest answer."

"Did Tuttle at any time ever speak of suicide?" I asked.

"Don't be daft, man!" Motts shouted furiously. "John was a happy, normal man, you know that!" He faced me squarely. "I don't want that rumor to get around, because there's just no foundation to it. He had plenty of money, the savings of more than ten years; pearls, too. He had everything to live for."

"And he knew the seas of the Tuamotu," I reminded Motts. "It wouldn't be like him to go for a swim in these shark-infested waters."

"That's just what's so baffling," Motts acquiesced. He shook his head hopelessly.

The longer I talked with Ben Motts on the shaded veranda of the store, the more confused I became over Tuttle's disappearance. The man had vanished without taking a cent of his money or any of his pearls. Motts had already forwarded his funds and possessions to Papeete, for transference to his sister in Melbourne, Australia. Three weeks had passed since the day of disappearance. There was only one opinion to hold—John Tuttle was dead. But was it accidental, or was it murder?

The simple facts were that John Tuttle had disappeared during the siesta period, while the pearl divers and copra workers of Hotu were napping after the noon repast; no one had seen him depart; no one had heard a telltale cry for help or of agony; no one knew of anyone who could be called John Tuttle's enemy. He was in the best of health, he had ample money. Certainly Tuttle had everything to live for.

Motts drank heavily of rum, as I conversed with him on the veranda that caught the cooling breezes of the southeast trade winds, and when I veered the talk around to the idea of native witch-

craft as the cause of Tuttle's departure, he paled and the fingers around his tumbler trembled. He didn't want to believe in *tupaupau* (ghost) talk . . . but he had lived a long time in the islands. Perhaps stories of affrighting specters were not too fantastic. Almost defiantly he shouted: "How do we know that there aren't such things as evil phantoms? We whites are skeptical, but the natives don't disbelieve, and they are closer to nature and supernatural influences than we!"

True, a man just doesn't vanish into thin tropical air without leaving behind some clue as to departure and destination. To that fact I had to agree.

"What makes you think that Tuttle might have fallen out of grace with the pagan ghosts of the Tuamotus?" I asked.

"He was always kidding Tahua, the village witch-doctor here," Motts replied thickly. "Kept asking him to conjure him up a blonde, or to make sharks fly through the air. Things like that. Tahua didn't like that a bit. Some of the natives told me the old witch-doctor had made a doll-size miniature of Motts, and had collected a bit of his hair, a piece of clothing, a cigarette butt, and was working a curse on him."

"I'll have to have a talk with Tahua," I said reflectively. "Is he down in the village?"

"Yes; but he's a queer one," Motts warned me. "Don't rile him."

I slept fitfully that night in the bed of John Tuttle.

The next morning, early, I paid a visit to Tahua, the witch-doctor. I found him in a small palm-hut in the center of the village. He was taciturn and sullen, until I made him the present of a carton of

Chinese cigarettes and a bottle of rum.

"You think the *popaa* (white man) Tuttle has been taken away by *Temeharo*, the bad-ghost-of-strangulation?" I asked.

Tahua's skeleton-like body trembled, and his bloodshot eyes burned into mine. "It has been his punishment," he shrilled.

He would consider no other solution.



I LEFT Hotu that afternoon for the return to Nukuraa.

While walking with Motts down the jetty to the schooner, arrested suddenly by a hitherto unnoticed view, I stopped, shaded my eyes and pointed across the dazzling lagoon toward the southern part of the barrier-reef. "What's that for?" I asked curiously. A crooked mangrove pole marked a high ledge of black coral, and nailed to it a short board, the crude lettering upon which was legible even at this distance—*TAPU!* (TABOO!). "What's the matter, are there sharks there?"

Motts shook his head. "No, that is where John's sun-helmet was found. Tahua said it was an evil spot, so he demanded that I place the sign there. Otherwise, he would forbid the divers to work. He's a power in the village, so I had to put up the warning."

"That old humbug Tahua seems to dabble into everything here on Hotu," I said meaningly. "But he looks like a harmless old crackpot to me." I shook hands with Motts at the gangplank. "I'd appreciate it if you'd let me know if any significant evidence turns up on Tuttle."

"I've abandoned hope on that score," he said morosely. "And I'm just about ready to quit here. The copra crop is worked out, and the pearl oyster beds are

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almost cleaned. I'll pull out of here within the next couple of months and go on back to Tahiti for a long rest. The natives most likely will go back to Hikueru Atoll, as that's their home island. They only came here to work for John and me."

So I left Ben Motts standing on the coral jetty in the South Pacific sunshine, a lonely, dejected man who had lost the only real friend he had ever had.

Several weeks later, while conversing with Tumi, a native skipper of a trading cutter, about Tuttle's strange disappearance, he suddenly said, with emotion, "That witch-doctor Tahua is a bad one, you know, blentay bad, I say! One time he stick shark-knife into pearl diver at Anaa Atoll!"

So Tahua did have homicidal tendencies. I sat down immediately, penned a report to the resident administrator at Fakarava Atoll, stating my suspicions and demanding that Tahua be apprehended for questioning and investigation. I dispatched it aboard Tumi's cutter.

But before Tumi's trading craft cleared the reefs of Nukuraa, another startling bit of news was to be brought to me by the skipper of the *Tautira* from Manga Reva Island in the Gambier Group. The *Tautira* had stopped by Hotu Atoll, to pick up Ben Motts for his last trip to Tahiti—but he was nowhere to be found on the atoll!

"There was not a living person on Hotu," cried the Tahitian skipper with dramatic import. "Monsieur Motts' things were on the veranda of the store, ready to be taken aboard, his hat was there, his walking-stick. But—like Monsieur Tuttle—he has disappeared!"

"We'll go back to Hotu," I said with finality. "It's only a short distance off your course to Tahiti."

We sailed within the hour.

The skipper, the sailors, the pearl divers, and I made a thorough search of the coconut groves, coral beaches and lagoon. Not a trace of Ben Motts could we find. Then, actuated by an intuition that I could not altogether suppress, I suggested that a number of us paddle out to the black ledge marked by the taboo sign. And it was only after a promise of a bonus that some of the pearl divers agreed to dive down the side of the ledge,

to explore the face of the underwater coral for me. They immediately brought back verification of the faint hope I had held.

"There is a great grotto twenty feet down," one of them informed me breathlessly. "It seems to lead upward into this *toa* (reef), where there must be a large hollow above water. It can only be a place of ancient burial."

When the divers returned for another investigation I went with them. I swam, with great trepidation, through the long black tunnel, finally emerging into a black pool above which arched the fissured ceiling of a tomb-like enclosure, formed in the long centuries by the natural percolation of sea-water which dissolved the coral-limestone, leaving this perfectly-shaped vault. Air and light came in through the cracks in the reef.

A diver gave a choked cry and pointed. I followed his trembling forefinger. I almost knew what I would see. There were two bodies in this ghastly tomb—one a skeleton, the other a mangled body, easily recognizable as Ben Motts. The former could only be John Tuttle.

The remains, with great difficulty, were brought to the surface and thence to the schooner, for burial at sea. It was not until I had read through many of Ben Motts' papers in his camphorwood chest on the veranda that I was able to solve the mystery of the death of John Tuttle. There was a small notebook, in the bottom, in which the trader had kept a sort of diary. And in this was recorded Motts' strange hatred of his partner. Certainly, the motive for murder had not been inspired because he knew that his assistant had a large sum of money in actual cash and pearls. It was for the simple and unchanging reason that in the slow and prodigious march of tropical time on Hotu, in days of calm and in days of storm, with vagaries of good fortune and caprices of bad, all accompanied year in and year out by the cannonadings of the surf that was like a maddening dirge across the protective reefs of this low atoll, he had come to hate with a crazed fury the handsomer, younger, more astute man. The fact that his junior partner always had larger shipments of pearl shell and Copra to send to Tahiti might have

had something to do with it, but in any case envy had at last concentrated into homicidal rage. So his burning hate for John Tuttle was like a cancerous growth that spread through his brain infecting his every thought and dream. He was not remorseful that he had come up behind the sleeping man that mid-afternoon and struck him a lethal blow across the head and neck with a pick-handle. The premeditated murder was born of a strong personal malevolence that he could not repress.

When or how Ben Motts, the murderer, had found the underwater cavern is of little importance. The fact is that he had found it at some time, possibly during an underwater fish-spearing adventure, and it had provided an excellent hiding-place for the body of John Tuttle.

Ben Motts' undoing was the fact that he could not dispel the gnawing and macabre curiosity to see what was left of his victim before leaving Hotu forever. Many criminals have had this strange compulsion to return to the scene of the crime.

Such it was with Motts—and it sealed his doom.



His return to the awesome tomb inside the reef can be imagined. Rising to the surface of the pool, after the long subterranean swim, he had crawled up across the low algae-carpeted coral shelf that extended clear around the circular marine dungeon, and squatted there on his haunches, staring fixedly at an object close by. Then, without a tremor in his voice, he said in mock politeness: "Well, John, you've changed a lot."

The dry scuttling sounds of green crabs inside the ribs of the human skeleton were perhaps the only response. He may have bent forward slowly to inspect the spinal column close to the base of the skull, and then nodding with definite conviction at the death's-head said, "As clean a break as anyone could ask for." Possibly he gave a sudden derisive laugh that echoed weirdly in the hollow sepulcher.

"I hope you appreciate all the trouble I took to lay you out in this beautiful and natural mausoleum."

Perhaps a small crab crawled out of one of the eye-sockets of the skull and he watched it slither down across the jaw-bone and disappear through the lattice of a rib-bone. Crabs, coral worms and sea snails had made a swift and clean job of all that was fleshly of John Tuttle. Motts' late trader-partner was now just a nameless parcel of yellow bones.

He stood up and airily saluted the skeleton. "Well, hail and farwell, John, and pleasant dreams."

He may have started to lower himself from the ledge into the stygian pool. But before his toes could touch the dark surface, he leapt back, his breath catching painfully in his throat. The sudden wild hammering in his heart made him dizzy and panic-stricken.

There was something down there in the black depths!

When the first sensation of panic had abated, he crawled slowly to the edge and stared down fearfully. Now he saw it clearly!—the hard outline of a great *Carcharodon* man-eater—the white killer-shark of the southern ocean, directly below the ledge upon which he had thrown his naked body. Its colossal bulk was stout and rounded, with pointed nose and an immense crescent mouth. Its large, curved pectoral fins moved gently, like beckoning hands, while Motts watched with bulging eyes and breath panting in whistling gasps. Now the monster cruised slowly upward, its jaws opened wide, flashing triangular teeth with serrated edges.

On each side of its body in front of the pectoral fins were five separate gill openings into which the pelagic killer convulsively gulped water. All these small details Motts' observant mind noted, as he watched hopefully for physical characteristics of the large fish that would reassure his quaking soul that below him cruised only a gentle denizen of the deep. But clear evidence now caused ice-water to filter through every pore. It was beyond a shadow of a doubt a huge white killer-shark.

The great white shark's back broke the surface of the pool, exposing the high dorsal fin and the powerful sickle-shaped tail.

(Continued on page 128)



*"Let's go, boys," Carls
said quietly, and
stepped out into space.*

HELL OR SLACK WATER

By W. V. ATHANAS



CORKS BRANNIGAN was not a big man. But, as many a red-eyed timberbeast had learned, Corks was hard as a pitch-pine knot and tough as a hemlock stump. He came up the hard way, in the rough fraternity of the lumberjack, through skid-punk and sniper, faller, buckler, and side push, until he came to this Oregon pine country as camp boss.

Of course, there were a couple of little things. Like building and outfitting a camp, forty miles into the wilderness. Keeping hay and grain on hand to feed some thirty-odd head of big logging horses. And of course, Mr. MacLarnan.

Mr. MacLarnan was Corks Brannigan's boss. A gray wiry Scot, he was, with a considering way of looking at a man, and a terse, pithy manner of speech.

"The mill is going in just below Squaw Creek," he had said meagerly, this three days past. "She'll cut a hundred thousand a day, cutting two shifts. I'll want a good ten million feet of logs this summer."

Just like that: bluntly, calmly, while his hand worked one side of his muttonchop whiskers to a neat point.

The thought came instantly to Cork's mind to bunch it. Pull the pin, hit the

road, head for town and the steam heat of Skidrow.

That was the first thought. But Corks Brannigan had come up the hard way. He had a stubborn pride that made him stand up to the size of physically bigger men. "Bull-headed," some said, but they stepped aside when his chin came out to a certain angle.

So he said to Mr. MacLarnan, "Tell your mancatcher down at the office to get me some timberbeasts. You'll have your logs."

Mr. MacLarnan said mildly and dryly, "Good." He still held his considering look on Corks for a moment, and his fingers fined out the point on his whisks. He seemed about to say something else, changed his mind and picked up the reins.

He said "Good," once more, without inflection, and wheeled his trim little buggy around onto the laboriously hacked road to Bannock.



AN HOUR after MacLarnan's rig had disappeared down the road, Corks was cursing himself for a damned fool. The weather had been holding, but he had a little over two million feet of logs on the cold-deck, and three quarters of the good logging weather was behind him.

Five million, yes. He could drive his 'beasts until they dropped, sneer at them and roar at them, laugh at them, feed them good, pay them a bonus. He'd get that much out of them, because Corks Brannigan was the kind of a boss the 'beasts wanted, and while they'd roar right back at him, and curse him for a log-hungry slave-driving moonlighter, they'd get out the logs, and brag about it for years to come.

But ten million feet—he shook his head wryly. Well, grab 'er by the face, bucko, and let's bull 'er through. We'll get out the logs if we have to summer-log and drive in slack water. Any damn fool knows you can't drive The Gut at anything but high water, but you told the man you'd get his logs out.

The next week was a heartbreaker. It snowed three feet overnight, and changed to a slushy drizzle midway through the next day. The carefully slicked and

graded skidroads turned to mushy messes. Two teams were laid up with pulled muscles. The barn boss got himself horse-kicked.

It separated the men from the boys. Five men quit, some profanely, some sullenly, and the mancatcher sent up more 'beasts, big burly roughnecks whose shoulders crowded the seams of their stag shirts, men with hard broad hands and second week, but there was no freeze in wool pants staggered off at the tops of steel-calked cowhide boots. Timberbeasts, bucko, from the upper forks of Hardwater Creek, hair-pounders and axemen who'd let daylight into the swamp.

It snowed again, the first day of the second week, but there was no freeze that night to put it in working shape. Corks put a go-devil with an angled iron blade over the skidroads, but the surface was chopped to pieces with every sled load of logs that passed. In one little swale, where three roads came together, the whole thing was a loblolly, and he had to pull a team off the haul to help drag the loaded sleds through.

It was killing work, on men and horses, and the cold-decks on the river inched up with maddening slowness. Corks wore his own private bath between the woods and the decks with a well tramped spot at the swale.

He arrived just now, to see a load foundered midway across, and the teamsters purpling the air with rich and varied lumberjack expletives. The huge logging horses reefed into the load with effort that made their straining legs quiver.

The load inched ahead, crushing through the slush with the runners almost completely buried, the logs of the load rubbing and groaning on the bunks. There was a hollow *pung!* and the four horses suddenly leaped ahead with the release of the weight. The tongue of the sled hit one of them in the ribs like a stick hitting a drum, then fell between them, broken off sharp at the tree-pin hole.

Corks snatched off his go-to-hell hat, flung it on the ground and did an intricate and maddened jig on it.

"By the holy old pink-toed prophet!" he roared. "May the Great Blue Goose come down with teeth like marlin-spikes and dig a ditch from here to the ocean and *drown the whole damned outfit!*"

Relieved a little, he dragged his hat out of the snow, beat it off against his thigh and slapped it back on his head, ignoring the calk holes he had stamped into it.

It was his trademark, that hat, and it had given him his name. He habitually wore out some six or eight hats a season with his calks, pronounced "corks" by the loggers, and it was his wry contention that a well-ventilated hat made for a healthy scalp.

Hat firmly anchored, he plowed into the icy slush, ignoring what worked down inside his boots, and began to dig under the front of the sled with his bare hands, seeking the damage. The tongue was broken just ahead of the draft gear of the lead runners. Quicker to put in a new tongue than attempt a splice.

"Hey," said one of the teamsters, "this hawss is stove up. Tongue cracked him on the leg."

"Let it go for now," said Corks, plowing through the swale. "I'll send the barn boss up after him. Clean that mess of stuff out from under the front while I get another tongue. If the team behind brings out the next load 'fore I get back, hook him in with a log chain and see if you can get it out of here. If it won't come, put a crosshaul on it and dump the whole blasted thing off to the side. Let's get some condemned, licentious, illegitimate, perverted, unprintable logs onto the deck!" He set out for the camp.



THE round trip was something over four miles, and he made it in a little less than an hour, carrying a hickory sled tongue over his shoulder, the barn boss

puffing in his wake carrying wrenches for the draft gear bolts. The next turn of logs was just pulling up behind the stranded load in the swale.

Corks didn't want to dump that load, with the decks as shy as they were. Maybe—with the extra team. They set the new tongue, Corks tightening up the bolts himself, lying on his back, half buried in the soaking slush and wedged under the threatening weight of the loaded sled.

They made it, with five horses, and got the second load out too. "Get 'em on the deck," ordered Corks crisply, and he ground slush under his calked heel as he wheeled to tramp toward the cutting crew.

It was a driving goad inside him, the urgency of this hopeless task, and he begrudged the time and men it would consume to build a skidway of peeled poles across the swale. But he had no choice. That bottleneck could stop the whole shebang. It meant another man pulled off production to keep the new skidway packed with snow for the runners to slide on. He'd have to see that a barrel of kingpin grease was spotted there, too, if this unseasonable thaw continued.

Time. Time! It rode his shoulders continually. And underneath was the knowledge, the certainty. Three weeks more, at the most. He'd have to drive, because there would be no logging when the real thaw came. There was The Gut.

Roaring River was a short river, and it was something less than eighty miles from the camp to the millsite. But Roaring River had cut a channel in one spot, only half a mile long, straight through solid rock. It narrowed here, and charged through the channel crazily, piling up a

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center crest that was feet higher than the waterline. Nowhere was there a hundred feet of sensible current. Great ragged rocks hulked all through The Gut, shouldering implacably into the surging water.

They smashed the water to high-leaping gouts of spray, turned it, twisted it, tortured it impossibly, and reluctantly let it go with a last booming crash on an angled wall at the far end.

That was why they only drove The Gut at spring flood. Then the mountains shed their heavy blankets of snow, and the river swelled and roared, filled The Gut, crowded it, hurled raging brown water through it so fast that the rocks were covered over, and for a few days it would carry logs through, faster than the sweating pike-pole men could feed them in. As the flood subsided, the fierce implacable rocks thrust their shoulders through again, and logs would smash and catch and wedge into impossible jams. No one had ever got one log in ten through The Gut in slack water.

The time came, inevitable as death itself. Corks broke his own record, and tramped six hats to rags in as many weeks. He was fined down, stringy and tough and short-tempered. There was no fat on the bellies of his timberbeasts. They brought in the logs and piled them on the decks, but there was just a little over five million feet on the banks of Roaring River when the Chinook came.

The warm wind murmured through the ranks of the pines, and sighed a little sadly across the littered cuttings where Cork's axemen had labored. The snow retreated from the high stumps, the bottom went completely out of the fine slick ice roads, and the bellowing voice of the river was never still.

Roaring was the word for it when the high water came. Up on the high slopes, the snow went down with every hour, soggy and heavy with water. The countless millions and billions of tons of it fed Roaring River, and the brown bellowing flood crept up and up, finally to driving pitch.

Corks jumped up on a stump by the decks, cast one last critical glance at the torrent, yanked his hat solidly down and howled, "Turn 'em loose!"

Sledgehammers thudded dully on the wedges, the great towering piles of logs gave a sullen warning grumble. For a long breath-taking instant they hung. Then with a grinding roar they began to tumble down the waiting rollways into the hungry water.

The 'beasts, new calks screwed into the soles of their high, tight-laced boots went out onto the heaving churning carpet of logs like agile squirrels, balancing peaveys and pike poles. The angry water lashed and roared at them, and they roared defiantly back. They skipped from log to bobbing log, quick and sure, and utterly confident, and they drove the rough-barked logs like live animals. A canny twist of the peavey here, a muscle-cracking thrust with a pike pole there, and the logs began to stream out on the driving crest.

It was a sight to warm the cockles of a logging man's heart, but there was no high warmth in Corks Brannigan's breast. He'd told the man he'd drive ten million, and he had hardly half that. He oversaw the rolling in of the last laggard log, and he automatically counted the gaudy spots that were his 'beasts riding the pitching, grinding, carpet of logs. Then he started his tramp downriver. He'd walk that seventy-odd miles ten times before the drive was over, he knew, as the drive strung out.

And at the end of it, he'd have to face Mr. MacLarnan and tell him he had not fulfilled his brag.



AND that's the way it was. They ran The Gut, with a raging torrent of water that took the logs through with blinding speed. They worked the clock around, with huge bonfires built on the shore to light the night, and they fought every laggard log that sought the beach, back into the greedy grasp of the booming current. Three days later, Corks Brannigan clumped into the mill office, and faced the questioning eyes of Mr. MacLarnan.

He pulled the scale sheets out of the breast pocket of his stag shirt and tossed them on the desk.

"A little over five million in the mill boom," he said. "Five million, six hun-

dred and thirty-seven thousand, to be exact."

Mr. MacLarnan regarded him closely, while his fingers teased out the point on his muttonchops.

"I thought the figure was ten million," he said mildly.

Corks felt a cold worm stirring in his stomach, but he kept his voice level.

"I figure to summer-log," he said stolidly. Mr. MacLarnan's eyes were suddenly sharp and frosty.

"You'll drive The Gut at slack water?" he inquired softly.

"I aim to," retored Corks shortly.

Mr. MacLarnan pursed his lips suddenly, and leaned back in his chair. He made a precise inverted V with his fingertips and regarded them closely.

"How old are you, Brannigan?" he inquired finally.

"Twenty-four," said Corks, and bit his teeth hard when he wanted to say, "If it's any of your damned business."

Mr. MacLarnan nodded slowly. "You came to me well recommended, Brannigan. I'm told you know logging. I am not one to put a boy to do a man's work . . ." his quickly raised hand shut Cork's outraged mouth with a vicious snap, . . . "nor do I hold a man's age against him." He reached under his long coat tails and brought out a handkerchief to wipe his lips with maddening deliberation.

"I am merely wondering if I would be wise to place confidence in a man who delivers half the stated amount."

Corks wanted to throw the job in the man's teeth. A mad, red destroying rage came on him. An overwhelming urge to kick the door down and throw this bland dry little bloodsucker halfway across the log boom. He felt the veins in his neck swell and throb as if to burst, and he saw Mr. MacLarnan through a fine clear film of red.

The urge was there, and at this moment he had strength enough to tear this whole mill to splinters with his bare hands. But there was something else. He had never been whipped. He had been there when the men were separated from the boys, and never had there been the slightest doubt about which Corks Brannigan was.

If he bunched it now, the job had

whipped him—his first job as camp boss. In every logging camp from Ponderosa to Salmon River, heads would nod and the word would be, "Good hand, Corks. Bit off more than he could chew, though, movin' up to camp push. Prob'ly be all right when he gets a little age on him." They'd say it wisely, and nod and spit on the stove and tell about the time Snake River George got the swell-head over his first bossin' job, till a big Swede sniper drove him a foot into the ground with a stake maul.

Corks said through his teeth, "You'll get your logs. You'll get 'em if I carry every illegitimate, incestuous, obscene and profane stick on my own back!" He wheeled to the door, his sharp steel calks gouging splinters from the floor. He turned back to stab a stiff forefinger at Mr. MacLarnan.

"And Mister, I'm going to personally shove the last one of those logs right down your dirty throat!" He tore the knob clear off the door when he slammed it.

Corks made a rep for himself that summer. The word got around that a crazy man was pushing the MacLarnan camp up on Roaring River. Before the spring rains were over, he had a chute built halfway up the side of Shako Mountain, and they said you could hear the boom of logs hitting the bottom of it for three miles.

Terse, profane orders came to the man-catcher's office in Bannock for 'beasts and horses, and none of them grew fat under Corks' merciless driving.

By the first of June, the ground had ceased its steaming, and towering pines released their fragrance under the heat of the sun. It was a restful, soothing smell, and a time for peace in the forest. But the ringing of axes and the rasping of saws was continuous, and every daylight moment heard the smashing and crashing and booming of the giant pines as they fell from the proud height they had held for a thousand years.

Another camp went in, a mile up the mountain, thrown up hastily with logs and poles and rough-sawed boards. No 'beast moved at a walk around this show. And the 'beasts, crazy breed that they were, bragged about it.

Freight wagons trundled and grumbled over the primitive Bannock road, weighted down with the materials Corks needed. Beans and flour and bacon. Miles of wire rope and fathoms of trace chains. Kegs of horseshoes and whole beef carcasses, sewn up in muslin. A four-foot stack of horsecollars and a ton of dynamite. Load after high-piled load of baled hay. Screw calks and wool pants and axe helms and chewing tobacco.

Mr. MacLarnan never showed his whiskered face. If he heard anything about this mad outfit, word of it never got to Corks.



THEY moved the logs. Some were yarded into the chute, to drop down the hill like a runaway express elevator. Some came into the decks, ground-skidding. Axemen sniped the ends of the logs, rounding off the sharp shoulders so that they would not dig into the ground. They sank the big iron tongs into them, and the big gallant horses surged into the collars. Sometimes it took four horses, or six, on a big butt log. But they went, and the decks grew and grew on the banks of the Roaring River.

It was late August when the scaler tossed his scribbled sheets on the commissary counter before Corks.

"Over the hump," he said tiredly. "Five million, and a few thousand to spare."

Corks looked like a dirty terrier. He hadn't shaved in a month, and sandy whiskers thrust out from his stubborn jaw in a hundred directions. There were lines under those whiskers, deep fishhook lines that went from his nostrils around the corners of his mouth. He'd forgotten how to smile, Corks Brannigan had, and he had a cold disinterested way of looking at a man.

"We'll log another day," he said briefly, "and then we'll drive."

"You looked at The Gut lately?" the scaler inquired.

Corks' eyes came on the man like two round hard marbles. "I have," he said harshly, "and I'll drive it. I'll drive it if I have to ride every log through myself, one at a time!"

The scaler shook his head slowly and clumped out. He had hiked down there

a few days past to have a look. It was something to bring nightmares to an iron-nerved river-hog.

Corks' orders the next morning were a little puzzling. "Yard in all the tops and cull logs on this slope," he told his side push. "Deck 'em on the lower rollways, by themselves."

"But Corks," expostulated the 'push. "They ain't a clear two-by-four apiece in some of them culls. They ain't good for nothin' but burnin'."

"Yard 'em in and deck 'em," repeated Corks gruffly. His tone left no room for argument. The side push slapped his thighs with a half-angry resignation, and strode away to get his 'beasts at it. Corks went to hunt up a bull-cook and have that man load up a pole sled with certain curious items.

They knocked out the wedges an hour after sunup the next morning. The towering pile of tops and cull logs groaned and squeaked and thundered down the rollways and splashed into the water. Only ten of the surest-footed 'beasts minced out over the drive. A few clumped down the shoreline with pike pole to keep the few slack eddies downriver clear.

There was little excitement, but a great wonder. For the huge towering piles of logs that were the main decks, stood untouched. The bulk of the crews stood around in quiet knots, feeling suddenly lost without Corks' merciless driving.

He had stepped into the mess hall that morning, picked the men he wanted, and said shortly to the rest. "Take it easy today. Check your rigger, 'cause we're goin' to give 'er hell tomorrow." That was all.

He strode down the bank now, occasionally sending a roaring order at some man on the river. Twice he took to the logs himself, peavey in hand, to break up some cluster that wanted to ground itself in the shallows.

Eight miles they drove them. Nine, and they were swinging into the last bend before The Gut. Even here, they could hear and feel the shuddering of the river, as the rocks of The Gut smashed the water asunder with wet relentless shoulders.

Corks stood on a stump on the point and bellowed through his cupped hands.

"Come in," he roared. "Everybody

in!" He snatched off his battered hat and swung it in a wide beckoning circle around his head.

They came scampering in, flitting lightly across the twisting, bobbing footing as easily as a lesser man might walk down his own hallway. They eyed him warily, questioningly, as they came in to him, but he did nothing but nod approvingly as he counted to see that they were all there. Then he tramped on down the trail toward The Gut, leaving the grinding drive of logs to follow untended.



ROARING River was never tame. Spring flood brought a raging torrent that strained the high banks, but slack water was a misnomer. Roaring River dropped off the high mountains too fast to ever be tame. Deep bubbling springs fed her, back at the headwaters, and a dozen sizable creeks emptied into her channel before she rounded Shako Mountain to make her wild plunge through The Gut.

There was no chance for speech where they stood, at the entrance of The Gut. The roaring cauldron sent its ceaseless vibration through them, an overpowering sensation of unleashed power.

The vanguard of the drive came into view around the bend. It slipped silently along, for the voice of The Gut shouted down the grumbling and grinding of the logs. They quickened their pace to the fatal drag of the racing current, and suddenly, they began to buck and pitch, feeling the unseen drag of current under the surface.

Faster and faster they came, shouldering each other ruthlessly, each eager to be

the first to hurl itself into the raging maw of The Gut, and then quite suddenly, the first log disappeared out of sight into the boiling foam.

It popped high in the air, some fifty feet downstream, leaping its full length into the air like a spawning trout. It fell back into the smother of white water without making a perceptible splash.

The main body of the drive came in now, whirling, tumbling, completely crazed by the clutch of the current. Here and there a log would heave itself up, dripping a sparkling veil of water, to come crashing down on its neighbors' backs like a bludgeon. Like crazed sheep in a slaughter-pen, they crowded and climbed on each others' backs, until with numbing suddenness, it happened.

One of the van-logs jammed itself crossways between two fanglike rocks. Instantly, three of its brothers smashed into it, end on, with rolling tons of water heaving them on. They could hear that crash all right. Splinters and foam and shards of dripping bark sky-rocketed fifty feet into the air. While one might count ten quickly, a jackstraw of logs piled up, thirty feet high, and half the width of The Gut. An immense bubble of solid furious water swelled up behind the jam and hurled a thirty-foot log like a spear a hundred feet through the air. It fell into the smother and disappeared.

The bubble grew and grew, throwing its remorseless weight on the pile, and it toppled in a senseless welter, toppled, and then as suddenly, stopped. Stopped dead, amidst the frenzied shrieking of the logs underneath, the splintering grind of tough wood fibers being torn to a stringy pulp. Corks suddenly realized that his

This situation calls for

WILDROOT CREAM OIL



fingers were aching from the grip he held on his peavey helve, that his mouth was wide open and he was yelling senselessly.

They could faintly hear the hollow boom as the laggards of the drive hurled themselves into the jam, and even now, the voice of The Gut was dying out. Corks wrenched his fascinated eyes away from the jam, calculating the way the water was backing up behind it. There was water squirting through, plenty of it, but the body of Roaring River could not force itself through the strangling mesh of the jammed logs.

But the water was piling up, countless millions of tons of it, thrusting and swelling and straining against the jam. Eventually, it would win, for if it could not go through, it would go over. But for the moment, The Gut was strangled.

Corks watched it carefully, for long minutes, assuring himself of the strength of the jam, ignoring the wondering stares of his 'beasts. He knew what they were thinking. This was a little drive of culls and tops. There were five million feet of sawlogs hulking on the decks upriver, now as effectively plugged there as if they had been welded down. A summer's killing work gone to hell without even a puff of smoke to mark its passing.

Corks whooped suddenly, and threw his peavey into the jam in a careless pinwheel.

"Now, by the holy old pink-toed prophet," he shouted, "we're goin' to go to loggin'!"

His men looked at him uneasily, and at each other, and they shook their heads in complete bafflement. But they followed him, to a man, when he strode out down along the high rim of The Gut.

Clear to the end of The Gut he strode, until he came to the angled wall of rock that marked it. There was a pile of material here, where the bull-cook had dumped it, rope and pinch-bars and stacks of boxes.



AN hour, they waited, while Corks directed the splicing together of ropes, and the water dropped away in The Gut. And as it did, a great hollow came into sight, down under this angled wall, a huge room-sized pocket carved there by

the uncounted years that Roaring River had pounded here. When at the end of the hour, the water showed no further signs of subsiding, Corks threw a quick bowline in the rope and pulled it up under his armpits. He took a deep breath and yanked his hat firmly down.

"Let's go, boys," he said quietly, and stepped out into space, spinning on the rope that had eight husky timberbeasts tailed onto it. It was a 'long way down, and to his foreshortened vision, the rope spun out to a mere thread where it angled over the rim. It tied knots in his belly, but he clamped his jaw and forced himself to watch the rock face that slid upward past him.

He landed in water nearly to his waist, water that fought him resentfully, wanted to pull him off the slippery rock shelf. For a panicky instant, he thought that the jam might have given way enough to send a surge of water that would blot him out of existence as a breath blows out a lamp. He snarled wordlessly at himself, and jammed the bar he carried into a crevice as a brace.

He leaned on it, found it holding, and waved at the dot far above that was the anxious head of one of his men. Slack came in his rope, and another came snaking down, weighted with a twisting pair of boxes. It came down gingerly, for each box held fifty pounds of sixty-percent dynamite. He guided them down to his feet, cast off the rope and tossed it free. It snaked up the wall again for another load.

He worked frantically, stooped over in the deepest part of the hollow, stacking the boxes tightly against the wall. Twice he had to duck beneath the surface of the icy water to feel out the footing for his boxes, and each time was like a short death. If that jam broke, his head would never find the surface.

Twenty boxes he stacked in there, and then a pine pole, ten feet long, came to him on the rope. Bound on one end with a cord whipping were ten sticks of dynamite. Three of them had shiny brass caps buried deeply in them, and three separate fuses were wound the length of the pole. He gingerly thrust the loaded end of the pole into the meager space in the heart of the stacked boxes, and teased out the ends

of the fuses. He fished the screwtop brass match safe out of his shirt pocket and waved his hands frantically in the air to dry them.

There was a little draft hugging the water here, and he made a bundle of half the matches and struck them all at once. They flared up in his numb fingers in a sudden ball of flame, and he thrust the three fuse ends into the ball. He waited long seconds, to assure himself that they would burn, and then he stepped out into the open and made a sudden upward gesture with his clenched hand, thumb stiffly upright.

The slack came out of the rope with a rush that jerked him clean off his feet, and he was pulled upward, clawing his way off the wall with hands and calked feet. He found his knees trembling under him when they hauled him over the rim.

"Let's get the hell out of here," he said tersely, and herded them ahead of him at a dogtrot. Inside his head, he was calculating.

Twelve feet of fuse, about a foot a minute. Say a minute in the hole, three minutes to pull him up to the rim. They'd covered a couple of hundred yards now, plenty of time. He slowed to a walk.

It wasn't very loud. He felt it as much as heard it. A deep, sullen thud that sent a little quiver up his legs. After that it was all in slow motion. A little crevice that angled up the face of the wall began to spread. A little tendril of white rock-dust drifted out of the crack, and then, slowly, leisurely, the whole angled wall began to tilt. Further and further it leaned, majestic, overwhelming in its size, and when it came down, the very earth danced beneath their feet. It filled the end of The Gut, wall to wall.

"Now," said Corks, "let's go blow that jam."

They took the drive through like clockwork, for while The Gut was rough water, it was deep water. It took the logs whipping through, feet above the hungry, frustrated rocks, and sweating timberbeasts worked at poling logs clear of the foot of the high smooth falls that marked the new end of The Gut. At the end of the week the scalers tallied five million one hundred thousand feet of logs into the mill booms.

Corks was wearing a new hat. He had gleefully tramped the last one to ruin as the first log leaped its clean arc over his new waterfall. He snatched it off now, jumped on it once to ventilate it, and clapped it back on. He took a peavey from one of his men and brought it down across a log butt. The stout hickory snapped, leaving a club some three feet long in his hand.

"Now," he said, "I'll see Mr. MacLarnan, if I have to chop my way through every sawdust-eater in this outfit!"



HE skipped lightly across the logs to the bank, and clumped straight toward the mill men who lined the bank. They melted away before him, and he smiled grimly and twirled his splintered bludgeon. There were more men on the plank walks, but they, too, stood aside.

He stalked into the big outer office and strode across it. He kicked the railing to splinters, disdaining to swerve the few feet to the swinging gate. He raised a foot and crashed it into the door of MacLarnan's office. The lock snapped and the door made its full swing on the hinges and smashed on the inner wall. Mr. MacLarnan looked up casually from his desk and said quietly, "How are you, Brannigan?"

It stopped him in his tracks. He stood with his mouth open, swaying like a drunk who has sobered up too quickly.

Mr. MacLarnan leaned back comfortably in his chair and made an inverted V of his fingers.

"I gave you an impossible job, Brannigan. I told you that you came well recommended. I'm an old man and I have no sons. I built this company from one team of horses and a set of patched harness. I want to see it in good hands."

Still Corks stared dumbly.

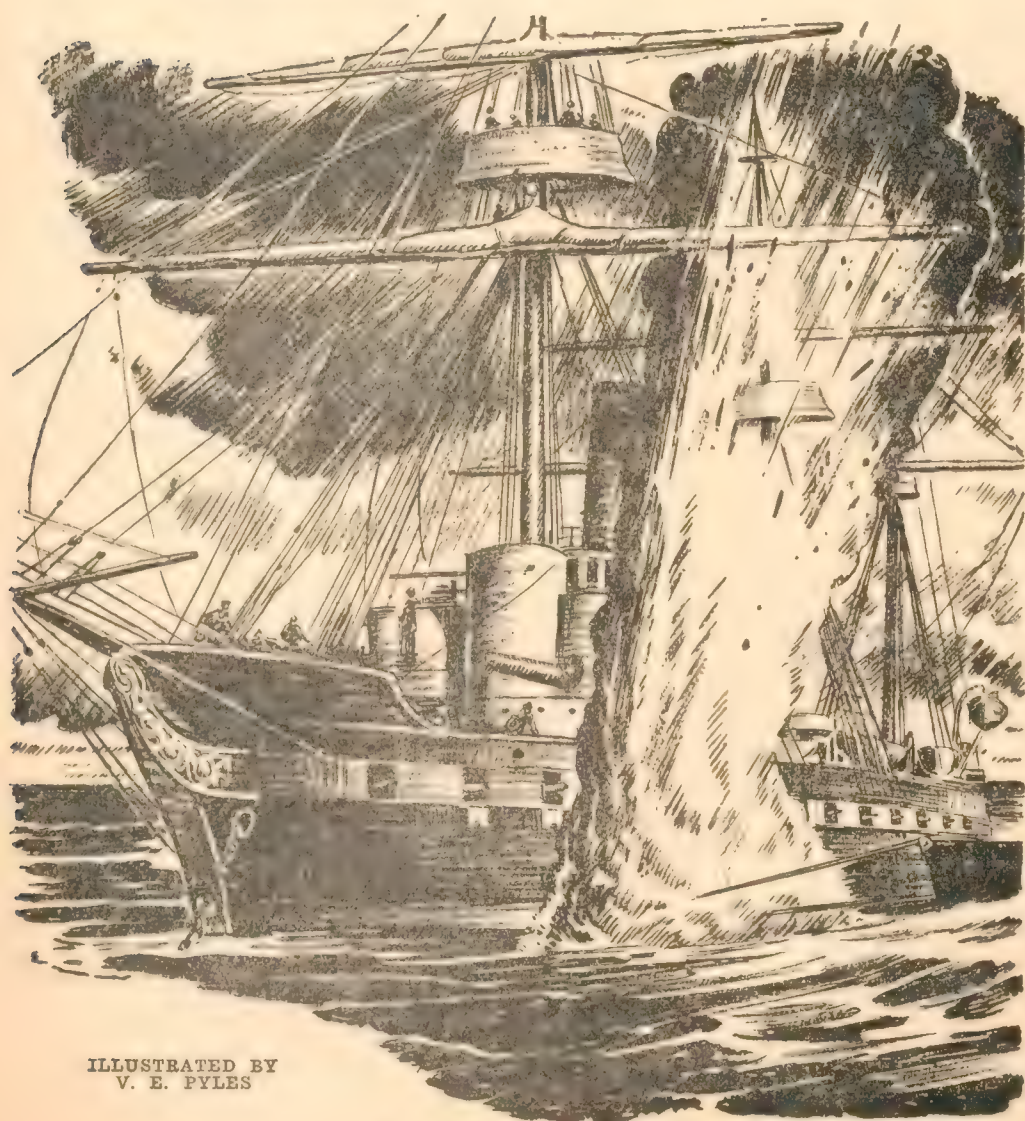
There was just the least ghost of a smile on Mr. MacLarnan's thin, disciplined lips.

"You'll go far, Brannigan," he said, "if you learn to hold your temper."

He was right, of course. Five years later, he oversaw the hanging of a freshly lettered sign.

MACLARNAN AND BRANNIGAN
LUMBER COMPANY, it said.

The Secret Weapon of the Southern Navy



ILLUSTRATED BY
V. E. PYLES

By H. G. RUSSELL

LIEUTENANT Hunter Davidson, Confederate States Navy, sat in the rudely constructed shelter at Drewery's Bluff, his attention completely absorbed by the chart before him. Clearly annotated on the chart spread out on the candlelit table were the positions of the Federal fleet blockading the lower James River. The gray-clad lieutenant drew a circle around the symbol representing the U. S. flagship *Minnesota*. Then, breathing deeply, he unconsciously spoke one word: "Sunk!" The marine sentry by the door forgot discipline for the moment and said in surprise, "You, sir!" The naval

lieutenant, too absorbed in his plans to notice this breach of strict etiquette, simply answered, "I was merely voicing a hope."

But the intrepid Davidson had been guilty of an understatement; for his hopes always embraced a carefully laid plan, as they had on the cloudy night on which he and his little party had carried out the necessary reconnaissance to place the very symbols on the chart before him, symbols that spelled doom for the hopes of the Confederacy unless Davidson could continue to draw circles around them. On this night of April 8, 1864, the Confederate naval officer had planned and calculated



The lowered spar extending from the bow of the Squib smashed into the flagship, and a terrific explosion followed.

more carefully than ever before. For this night was the one for which all his other risky forays were but preparation. This was the night when he and his picked crew of six would blow the Yankee flagship to high heaven or him and his crew to hell.

The marine again interrupted the lieutenant's reverie. This time the sentry said, "Sir, the men are here."

Davidson buckled on his sword and went outside. No roll call was necessary, for even in the dark of the night Davidson could distinguish the familiar figures of his trusted crew, every man specially chosen for his personal qualities of daring, reticence and technical skill. The Confederate lieutenant talked quietly to each in turn, making sure that each member of the crew was sure of his part in the dangerous task before him. Davidson and his men then proceeded as noiselessly to the landing and went aboard the strange craft called the *Squib*. The crew was made up of two acting masters, an acting boatswain, a first assistant engineer, a first-class fireman, and a pilot, a complement as strange as the craft they manned.



AS the boat swung out into the stream she gave the appearance of a picket boat. The darkness of the night made it difficult to discern her exact length, but she appeared to be between thirty and forty feet, of sharp lines, propeller-driven, with the ability to get up steam rapidly, and to be able to turn with great celerity. A closer inspection would have revealed her engine concealed under a low, cupola-shaped, musket-proof house, covered with boiler iron, which also protected the fireman, the engineer, and two additional members of the crew. Both engine and boiler were aft with the funnel close to the stern. Forward of the cupola, housing the engine was an open cuddy with side seats for the pilot and the rest of the crew. The boat was steered by a small wheel forward of the open seats, the entire open area being protected by a wash-board. The queerest part of the gear on the entire craft was that for which this novel launch was especially designed. It consisted of a spar protruding beyond the bow at the end of which was an egg-shaped torpedo containing fifty-three pounds of gun-

powder. Since the spar was fastened to a gooseneck on the bow just below the water line and had guy ropes running to the sides of the boat, it could be raised and lowered by means of a winch forward of the steering wheel. This improvised torpedo boat, that had to deliver its punch in person and then back away, the attacker that necessarily shared all the perils of the attacked, was the secret weapon of the Southern Navy. But as clumsy as it was, it was ingeniously contrived and it struck terror to the hearts of the Northern naval commanders, none of whom had yet been able to fathom its fine lines in the dark. So fearful was the Federal admiral at this time that he had issued orders to have each ship in the squadron lying at anchor, patrolled by a tug which was to circle the warship it was guarding.

It was against the flagship of such a well-protected fleet that Lieutenant Davidson projected his attack.

Down the James the Confederate States Torpedo Boat *Squib* steamed, taking advantage of the cover of darkness to assure greater secrecy and to avoid being observed from scouts ashore. During the day she lay concealed in rendezvous previously reconnoitered, starting out once more when night had fallen and covering 120 miles in all before she sighted the black hulks that loomed ahead, indicating the presence of the Federal blockading squadron.

At this point the utmost caution was necessary, for the Federals had been forewarned by previous attempts that had failed due to the experimental and unproven character of the weapon. But the gallant Southern naval officer threaded his way through the Federal fleet until he could pick out the huge dark hull of the flagship *Minnesota*. Davidson knew that the tug *Poppy* had been assigned to protect the 3300-ton frigate and he did not fear an encounter with this diminutive craft as much as the foiling of his mission, although a head-on collision between the two small boats would unquestionably have blown them both to bits.

It was now about two o'clock in the morning of April 9. The *Minnesota* was riding to the ebb tide and Davidson's little craft was about 200 yards off the port beam of the flagship when the torpedo-

boat commander was hailed by the frigate. In reply Lieutenant Davidson answered, "*Roanoke*." By this time the *Squib* was directly abeam the flagship. The deck officer of the *Minnesota* came down from the bridge and again hailed the *Squib*, ordering her not to come alongside. Davidson answered, "Aye! Aye!", but as he did so he took the wheel and headed the torpedo boat directly for the side of the flagship. The Yankee officer shouted, "Keep off or I'll fire!" But the Southern torpedo officer drove the launch into the towering black hull.

A heavy gun from the frigate boomed and a shell whistled overhead but by now the intrepid little *Squib* was too close to be touched by the guns of the big vessel. Musket shots raked her deck as the sentries on the gangways fired at her. Simultaneously the now lowered spar extending from the bow of the *Squib* smashed into the flagship just abaft the port main chains. A terrific explosion followed and Davidson and the pilot were thrown to the deck of the little craft. Recovering his senses he picked himself up from the deck, gave orders to the engineer, and backed quickly away from the frigate.

Above he could hear the drum beating to quarters; as the torpedo boat stole away in the night he made out dim forms on the flagship as the crew rushed on deck. The booming of one of the big guns of the frigate told him that the *Minnesota* was still afloat, as did the screech of its 9-inch shell overhead. A gunboat astern of the flagship opened up and added its voice of menace to that of the frigate as the Confederate torpedo boat was lost in the mist of the James.



WHEN Lieutenant Davidson returned to his rendezvous on Turkey Island, he examined the ship in the gray dawn. She had been riddled by musket bullets but the crew had miraculously escaped injury. He then sent this simple wire to the Secretary of the Confederate Navy: "Passed through the Federal Fleet off Newport News and exploded 53 pounds of powder against the side of the flagship *Minnesota* at 2 A.M., 9th instant. She has not sunk, and I have no means yet of telling the injury done. My boat and party escaped without loss under the fire of her heavy guns and musketry and that of a gunboat lying to her stern."

Thanks to her heavy tonnage and the relatively light charge in the Confederate torpedo, the Federal flagship remained afloat but the damage to her hull and ordnance was anything but slight. In the port after shell room the bulkheads were badly sprung; in the spirit room the planking was sprung, decks started up, ladders and shelves were broken; and in the ordnance department, gun carriages were disabled and a whole supply of canisters, shell boxes and bags, sponges, rammers, and other valuable equipment were destroyed by the impact. The daring Confederate torpedoman had planned his attack with skill but the experimental nature of the secret weapon had prevented the greater success that he would have achieved if an explosive missile of greater force had struck the *Minnesota* in exactly the same spot.

Davidson's deed, however, was sufficient to spur the Federals on to greater vigilance against similar attacks and to initiate a careful reconnaissance of the

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new weapon threatening the safety of the Northern blockading squadron. Injury to Yankee pride in its powerful navy and the shattering blow dealt its splendid morale were undoubtedly more far-reaching in their effects than the purely local damage done by the little *Squib*. The ensign who commanded the sentinel tug *Poppy* was reduced to warrant officer status while the engineer of the tug and the acting master's mate, who had the watch, were dismissed from the service.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Hunter Davidson of Dixie's fighting navy was promoted to the rank of commander on June 10, 1864. The citation read: "Promoted for gallant and meritorious conduct in command of the torpedo boat *Squib* in passing through the enemy's fleet off Newport News on the night of April 9, 1864, and attacking the steam frigate *Minnesota*."

No neophyte to the naval service was the dashing Davidson. Born in the District of Columbia, young Davidson was appointed to the United States Naval Academy from Virginia. A lieutenant in the Federal service when the War between the States broke out, he accepted a Confederate naval commission as first lieutenant and was assigned to the Confederate States steamer *Patrick Henry* in 1861. The following year he was transferred to the ironclad *Virginia*, better known by her old name in the U. S. Navy, the *Merrimac*. As a U. S. naval officer Hunter Davidson had known her as a steam frigate when on duty at the Gosport navy yard. He had witnessed her spectacular conversion and he went into battle with her against the Federal fleet at Hampton Roads on March 8 and 9, 1862. Shortly thereafter he was shifted to the newly organized torpedo service to superintend the planting of mines, then called submarine batteries, along the James River. He was given command of the Confederate State gunboat *Tcaser* and the newly constructed steamer *Torpedo*. He held this post for two years, crowning his career with the daring exploit against the *Minnesota*. He was transferred to naval intelligence and assigned to special service abroad. He returned during the last year of the war to command the C.S.S. *City of Richmond* and to share the perils of his comrades in the final campaigns that spelled doom for

Dixie's intrepid navy and the cause of the Confederacy.



THE secret weapon of the Southern Navy was not brought into being overnight.

As early as July 7, 1861, improvised and crudely constructed floating mines were sent downstream against Federal vessels in the Potomac. They were observed by the vigilant Yankees, and being of simple construction, their fuses were snuffed and the casks containing the explosives were secured by Federal sailors manning small boats. Subsequent attempts to blow up the ships of the Northern Navy were launched on the far-flung waters of the Confederacy. The Mississippi, the Savannah, and the Neuse Rivers were all scenes of abortive attacks on the Yankee fleet by mines varying as greatly in construction as the ships against which they were directed.

These activities excited the Confederate Congress and filled it with the hope that an offensive weapon previously unknown in the annals of naval warfare might be developed which would rob the Northern Navy of its predominant position and place it on the defensive. Thus the hunted would become the hunter, and the small but resourceful navy of the South would break the blockade and open up the sea lanes to ships that stood off in the gray dawn waiting to supply the Confederacy.

To encourage the development of such a weapon, the Confederate States Congress passed an act on April 21, 1862 providing that the inventor of any device by means of which an enemy vessel should be destroyed would receive a cash award equal to one-half the value of the ship so shattered and one-half the value of its armament. Inventions so rapidly increased, it became necessary for the Congress to establish a Torpedo Bureau at Richmond in October, 1862 in command of Brigadier General G. J. Rains. This particular piece of legislation authorized the formation of a secret corps, first a part of the army, out of which developed the Naval Submarine Battery Service, headed by the distinguished Captain M. F. Maury, formerly of the United States Navy and one of the most brilliant scholars who ever trod a quarter-deck. Captain Maury's able

second in command was Lieutenant Hunter Davidson, later to succeed him when Maury was sent to Europe on a special mission in connection with the new type weapon.

The vacillation of the legislators, then as now, resulted in costly delays. More than a year after the initial encouragement extended to inventors, the Confederate Congress tardily included a mere \$20,000 for this branch of the Navy Department in its general appropriation bill of May 1, 1863. This was, however, the first appropriation of its kind in naval history. It was followed by another of \$100,000 on February 17, 1864 for the construction of submarine batteries and of a third sum for \$250,000 on June 13 of the same year. Finally, after three years of debate in both houses during which time the newly conceived and poorly provided-for Torpedo Corps had covered itself with glory and revolutionized naval warfare, the Southern legislators passed a bill appropriating six million dollars! By then however the Confederate Navy was bottled up and the Northern armies were marching against its bases.

In spite of the inadequate means at their command the officers delegated to this hazardous duty set up torpedo stations at Richmond, Wilmington, Charleston, Savannah, and Mobile. The term "torpedo" was used to denote the secret weapon of the South. Today it would be called a mine. The same name was given to the spar-torpedo of the type used to attack the *Minnesota*. The latter was actually a predecessor of the modern torpedo. About sixty officers and men were assigned to each station. While they were nominally under the command of the naval officer in charge of the navy yard, they operated independently and were responsible for results to the head of the bureau at Richmond.

The entire corps was made up of volunteers specially trained for the risky work entailed in working with weapons whose characteristics were so little known. Their duties consisted of building and assembling the mines, laying them under cover of darkness and often within hailing distance of the Federal fleet, inspecting them and making repairs when necessary. **The men were carefully selected and sworn**

to the secrecy that was so essential to carrying out their mission. In turn they were granted unusual privileges as a recompense for the perilous and arduous nature of their task. Prize-money was also awarded as an extra incentive for extraordinary daring of which there seemed to be no shortage. The daily work of the Torpedo Corps was not without results. The heavy Federal losses in Mobile Bay were directly due to the Torpedo detachment at that station whose members planted 180 mines to obstruct the passage of Admiral Farragut's fleet. These were the celebrated torpedoes that Farragut damned.



THE greatest care in the selection of coins will not prevent the turning up of an occasional bad penny, nor will similar pains taken in the picking of a crew necessarily result in the enlisting of a complement that will prove to be one hundred percent loyal. At least that was the experience of the Torpedo Corps at Charleston. Lieutenants Parker and Glassell with a picked crew operating from small boats with detachable spar torpedoes set out on a secret expedition to attack the monitors commanding the Confederate positions. Parker tells the story of the betrayal.

"I drilled the boats well before starting on the expedition, and satisfied myself that everything was in good working order, and that every officer and man understood what he was expected to do. We kept our plans to ourselves so that spies might not carry the news to the enemy. All hands were in fine spirits. . . Glassell and I had a field bed in a room together; and shortly after daybreak I saw his coxswain come in and call him. After a few whispered words they went out together. I feared something was wrong and got up, and while making a hasty toilet Glassell returned and reported that one of his very best men could not be found, and he feared he had deserted to the enemy. Glassell had been out several times during the winter trying to blow up one of the vessels off Charleston, and this man had always accompanied him; consequently, he knew all about our torpedo arrangements. . . A picket soon came in who had been oc-

cupying the church steeple at Rockville during the night. He said shortly after daylight he saw a boat from one of the monitors pull into the marsh and take a *stake* from it. He said he remarked to his companion that he wondered at their doing so, as the stake must be wet and would not burn. That 'stake' was our man. He had made a straight wake for the fleet, waded through the marsh to the water's edge, and waved his hat for a boat to take him on board. In the afternoon General Hagood came down and we agreed that the expedition must be given up. Our hope of success lay in surprise, and that was no longer possible. The point now was to save the boats and the men; the loss of the latter would seriously impair the efficiency of our two ironclads at Charleston."

There were however many instances of the successful employment of the newly developed weapon against the invading forces of the North, occasions on which severe blows were dealt not only to the prestige of the powerful Federal Navy but to the ships that no longer serenely rode the seas and to the officers and men who slept but fitfully in their bunks and hammocks never sure when death would strike stealthily from beneath the waves.

Within two months after the establishment of the Torpedo Bureau in Richmond, members of the newly formed naval service had made history by blowing up the first warship ever to become a victim to the new torpedo warfare. The Federal ironclad *Cairo*, one of the most powerful vessels of the Mississippi squadron was sent to the bottom of the Yazoo river on December 12, 1862 by an electric torpedo exploding under her bow.

The *Cairo* accompanied by four other gunboats, was engaged in proceeding up the river with the mission of locating and destroying any torpedo mines encountered. Hearing the firing of musketry, the skipper of the *Cairo* in command of the reconnaissance sailed to the aid of the ship he thought was being attacked by sharpshooters from the shore. When he hove in sight of her, he discovered that her crew was employing rifle fire to explode suspicious objects believed to be floating mines. He ordered them to cease firing and to examine the would-be mines by putting out boats.

In backing away from shore, the *Cairo* struck a nest of mines. Three blasts were heard in rapid succession. One close to the port quarter; the other under the port bow. The guns were lifted from the deck and in two or three minutes the water was over the forecastle. The Yankee commander headed for the shore but a few yards distance, hoping to save his ship by beaching her. The pumps were manned and the sick were removed to another gunboat standing by. The crew took to the boats as the Federal gunboat was sinking rapidly. Within twelve minutes after the explosion, all but the top of the smokestacks had disappeared beneath the waters of the Yazoo. The Confederate torpedo-men who chalked up the first score of this type in naval annals were Acting Masters McDaniel and Ewing.

The *Cairo* incident was soon followed by others and the weapons for which the old line naval captains of the North had shown such contempt became dangerous instruments of war greatly to be feared. No theatre of war was safe from the undersea menace which the Confederates had planted in all the significant waters of the South. Ten weeks after the blowing up of the *Cairo* in the waters of the west, the monitor *Montauk* engaged in tracking down the Confederate privateer *Nashville* was struck by a torpedo in the Ogeechee River of Georgia. The ship was saved from total destruction by running her on a mud bank but the damage was so great it took a month to make her seaworthy.

Back in the west the ironclad gunboat *Baron deKalb*, a ship of great strength, was completely destroyed by a torpedo planted by Lieutenant Isaac N. Brown. Two torpedoes exploded under her and she went down in fifteen minutes. Thus the ships of the industrial North whose heavy metal plating made them invulnerable to the artillery of the time were like amphibian monsters whose hard shelled backs afforded them no protection when their assailant attacked them in the soft underbelly. Admiral Porter reported this second Yazoo casualty to the Navy Department: "We cannot guard against these hidden dangers while an enemy's flag floats. The usual lookout was kept for torpedoes, but this is some new invention of the enemy."

The secret weapon had proven a success and was admitted by the Northern admirals to provide the weaker Southern force with a defensive weapon that could seal the harbors against the invader and one as well against which the blockading fleet had no effective protection. The results which this new engine of war obtained in the closing months of the war assured its place in naval warfare and made the Union naval commanders realize how close they had come to losing their navy.

The achievements in the use of torpedoes and mines brought to a state of near-perfection by the Confederate Navy was the culmination of a long struggle against failure, prejudice, and ridicule. The idea of destroying ships by underwater explosion was not wholly original with the Confederates. David Bushnell of Connecticut first experimented, but without final success, with various types of mines and torpedoes in the Revolutionary War. Later Robert Fulton of steamboat fame preached the revolutionary torpedo techniques to the governments of France, Britain, and the United States, carrying out partially successful demonstrations in the harbors of Brest and New York and off the English coast. But the opposition of the reactionary admirals in all three navies proved to be a greater handicap than the mechanical imperfections which were later overcome as the weapon developed under the ingenuity of the Confederate naval engineers.

Other experiments were carried out by Colonel Samuel Colt, chiefly that of operating the mine by electric batteries, but the United States allowed the information to die in its files. The Russians at Sevastopol and Cronstadt sowed these harbors with mines during the Crimean War but no ships were sunk as a result of these defensive measures. It required the overwhelming odds which the North brought to bear against the Confederate Navy to put the new weapon into dynamic action.

In general there were three types of defensive mines or torpedoes as they were called since Fulton. These were *frame*, *floating*, and *electric*. Wooden frames were set up under water in narrow and shallow channels, at the mouths of rivers and creeks, and upon sandbars where

vessels of light draft would pass. The frame consisted of timbers similar to two-by-fours, slanting upward from a cross timber resting on the bed of the stream and resting on a higher structure resembling a goal post sunk into the bottom. Fastened to the top of each two-by-four was a cast-iron torpedo weighing 400 pounds but containing only 27 pounds of powder. Weights, anchors and chains kept the frame at the desired angle. These devices served both to block the channel and to blow up any ships of light draft attempting to force an entrance. Their effectiveness can best be judged by the words of a Federal naval officer who encountered them in the course of duty. "Our gunboats never, during the war, attempted to force a passage through a channel defended by this form of torpedo, and it would have been impossible to have passed either to Charleston, Mobile, or Wilmington, without encountering them."

The floating torpedo might very properly be called the beer barrel bomb for that was precisely what its case was made of. All over the South the Confederate government confiscated large beer barrels to fabricate floating for buoyant torpedoes. The barrel was filled with 70 to 120 pounds of gunpowder, then the inside and outside were coated with pitch, the barrel was sealed and a pine cone attached at either end to keep it from rolling. There were the usual ropes, weights, and mooring lines. They were planted by two men operating from a small boat whose production rate was four an hour. These were a relatively inexpensive but highly dangerous weapon and the corps kept a large stock on hand for any sudden ascent by the monitors.

Another type of buoyant torpedo was one especially designed to defy and destroy the sweepers. A copper casing attached to the end of a spar, the other end of which was held by a universal joint to an anchor in the mud eluded the sweeping and dragging operation but when the boat engaged in this dangerous work passed over the spot, the mine, a pendulum upside down, swung up and blew the boat and crew to bits. There were other buoyant types, as well as the clock work torpedo, predecessor of the time bomb. Then there was the infamous coal torpedo so hated by the

Yankees. It consisted of a block of cast-iron with ten pounds of powder in a hollow core. The block was coated with coal dust and looked like a lump of coal. The Torpedo Corps contained a group of volunteers assigned to this duty in disguise who were therefore subject to the death penalty if caught. They worked on the wharves occupied by the Federals and loaded the coal on the barges or into the bunkers of ships, slipping in coal torpedoes when chance offered. Many transports were blown up this way. The disasters were thought to be due to mysterious boiler explosions. Even General Ben Butler's own headquarters ship, the *Greyhound*, was destroyed by a coal torpedo. The General and his guest, Admiral Porter of the Union Navy, had a narrow escape from the flaming ship.



BY FAR the best type of mine which the Confederates conceived for harbor defense was the electric torpedo. Originally made from the boilers of old steamers and containing almost a ton of powder, these death-dealing mines became the most important part of the defenses in the James River, at Fort Fisher, and at Mobile where they were used with what a Federal officer called "appalling effect." These mines were fired from range pits along the shore when the Northern ships came in line with the mines. Towards the end of the War special casings were manufactured for them and the simple improvised batteries first employed were replaced by Wheatstone's Magnetic Exploder, an elaborate device especially manufactured for the Confederates in England.

From defensive devices the Southerners turned to offensive weapons, chief of which was the spar torpedo that became the forerunner of the modern torpedo boat and the later destroyer. A specially designed craft, resembling Davidson's *Squib*, but constructed more on the lines of a small submarine with ability to submerge except for the small funnel and hatch-combing was put into action on October 5, 1864 under command of Lieutenant W. T. Glassell, one of the bravest and most competent officers of the corps.

Glassell headed his strange craft from its anchorage at the Charleston station

toward Morris Island where the powerful *New Ironsides* rode. It was past nine o'clock but in spite of the haze overhanging the coast, the officer of the watch on the Federal warship was alert and hailed the Confederate when she was within 300 yards. Glassell did not respond to the challenge but fired at the officer on the deck, mortally wounding him. An instant later the torpedo boat struck the huge hulk before it with such force that the *David's* fires were extinguished by the column of water thrown up by the explosion. The machinery jammed. The boat would not move. The Northerners poured in a rain of musketry on the trapped torpedo boat. Then the commander ordered his men to abandon ship and swim for it. After being in the water for an hour, the Confederate lieutenant was picked up by the Federals and taken prisoner. Meanwhile Engineer Toombs, swimming in the shadow of the Federal fleet, sighted the *David* adrift. He stroked over to her, pulled in a member of the crew hanging to her half-drowned, fixed the engine, and landed the craft safely in Charleston next morning. The *New Ironsides* did not sink although she was severely damaged and withdrew from the station permanently.

Soon replicas of the *David* were being built all over the inland waters of the South. When the War closed there were a number under construction. But the secret weapon had come too late to turn the tide against the North. The Yankee admirals also studied the torpedo techniques of the Confederates and in the famous *Albermarle* incident the secret weapon boomeranged with terrific and disastrous effect on the Navy of Dixie. The irony of the situation was that Lieutenant Cushing of the United States Navy sank the famous Confederate ram with a spar torpedo rigged on a captured launch originally built for the Confederate Torpedo Service.

Toward the close of the War in the vicinity of Mobile Bay mines sown by the Torpedo Corps accounted for about ten Union warships, including monitors, ironclads, gunboats, and transports. Most of these vessels were destroyed by the buoyant type of torpedo. These operations proved conclusively the value of the weapon developed by the Confederacy,

adopted now by the North, and soon to become the forerunner of a new era in Naval Warfare. Within a few years all the navies of Europe went to work building swarms of torpedo boats, especially smaller nations seeking a defensive pattern.

As the curtain rang down on the bloody drama in the South, the last U. S. warship to feel the sting of the onetime secret weapon was the gunboat *Jonquil*, which struck a mine in the Ashley River near Charleston on June 6, 1865.

In the closing months of the War, before this hotbed of the Confederacy was taken, the Charleston Squadron of the Confederate Navy was reduced to two ironclads and some lighter craft, all bottled up by the numerically superior Northern naval force. The victorious Union armies

were driving wedges into the heart of the Confederacy. There was need for desperate weapons and daring deeds. Both were provided by the Torpedo Corps in their last great efforts.

Yet in spite of the disaster that daily stalked the city, an officer of that intrepid organization, who was engaged nightly in forays against the black vessels of the Union fleet ominously riding at anchor like the ghosts of doom, was able to write: "Charleston was very gay about this time; parties and picnics were the order of the day, and all seemed inclined to follow the advice of the old poet who has written:

" 'Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old time is still a-flying;
And this same flower that smiles today
Tomorrow will be dying.' "



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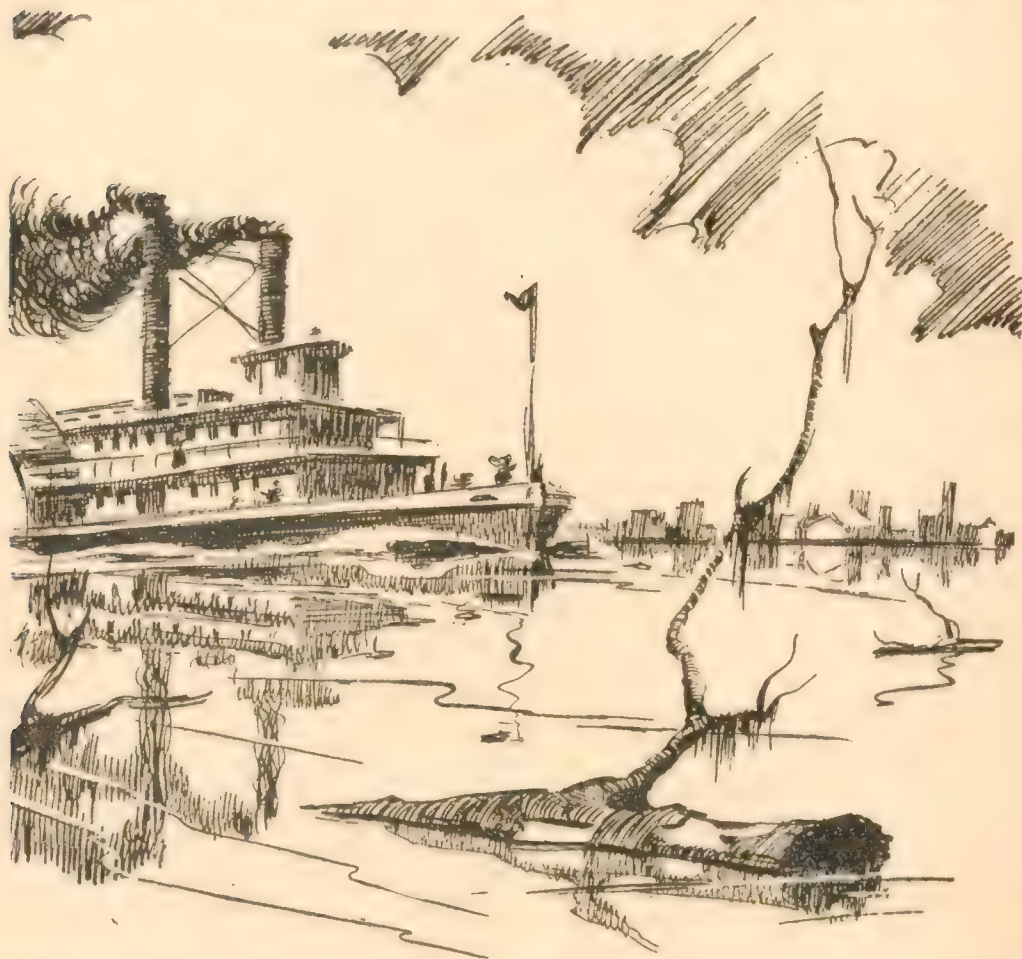
Captain McCARGO'S



Paddlewheels turning and spray flying, the Prairie Dew and the Eclipse straightened upstream bound for Natchez, Memphis, St. Louis and the north star.

By WILLIAM RATIGAN

LAST WILL and TESTAMENT



OLD CAP SPARHAWK settled his rump in the deacon seat of Detroit's Steamboat Hotel, took a chaw of Peerless Plug, and scored a sizzling bull's-eye on the pot bellied stove.

"They call Old Man Mississippi the Father of Waters," he rumbled, "and in my book they ain't far wrong. You might say Big Muddy's got five strapping daughters—Erie, Ontario, Huron, Michigan, Superior—the hull passel of Great Lakes. Come right down to it, Noo Or-

leans and Natchez and Saint Looy—they're sister ports to Duluth and Milwaukee and Buffalo. Am I right?"

When Sparhawk shifted his cud belligerently and shot blue lightning from under the iron-gray thunderheads of his penthouse brows, nobody cared—or dared—to dispute his word on such a trifling matter as geography. The Steamboat Hotel crowd leaned forward in silence, ears strained toward that Downeaster twang.

"Big Muddy," Sparhawk continued

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES GEER

after a challenging pause, "is the longest, strongest, dawgonedest river in creation. Changes course so often that when a town along the banks goes to sleep it don't know whether it'll wake up in Louisiana or in the sovereign state of Mississippi. I knew a Nigra once—he went to bed a Missouri slave, but the river plumb dislocated a couple of state borders by cutting itself a new channel during the night, and that Nigra hopped from his bunk at dawn, a free man in Illinois!"

For punctuation Sparhawk r'ared back in the deacon seat and rattled the brass of a cuspidor twenty paces away. "Old Man Mississippi and young Captain McCargo," he reflected, wiping sleeve across whiskers. "Two of a kind, and I've never seen their beat. Heaven-sent and hell-bent for election. Not quite sure of where they was headed, but all-fired impatient to arrive. Why, I remember the time . . ."

Whereupon Uncle Ben Sparhawk proceeded to spin another of his yarns about young McCargo, a yarn already legend from the Mouth of the Mississippi to the humped spine of Canada's Laurentians, from the land of cotton and sugar cane to the land of copper and iron outcroppings above the Soo. We'll have to close-haul the quarter-deck language to weather out a sail in modern waters, but here's the gist of the old gent's story.



IN the heart of New Orleans' French Quarter stood the St. Louis Hotel, popular haunt of aristocratic Creoles, center of the city's social line, scene of fashionable balls and masquerades, headquarters for Madri Gras. There, while ice jailed his sweetwater lakes and landlocked the snowy-canvassed *Minong* at Detroit, Captain Thunder Bay McCargo rented a suite for the winter as a base of operations to keep company with Uncle Ben Sparhawk whose *Prairie Dew* churned the Mississippi between the Gulf and Memphis on a sidewheeler holiday from the Great Lakes run.

Black Pompey and Red Massasauga hustled bales and passengers aboard; Cormac barked livestock across the gang-plank; Sparhawk blew for the landings; McCargo called for cards in the main saloon. Sparhawk gambled with the river

and McCargo gambled with the river gamblers, and twice they felt the brush of death—once when Sparhawk sheered off at the last moment from a snaggle-toothed sawyer which would have ripped the bowels from the *Prairie Dew*, and again when one of McCargo's derringers stuck in his sleeve as a tinhorn professional climaxed a losing streak by fisting a gun from under the table; but McCargo's other derringer didn't stick, and they planted the tinhorn at Natchez-behind-the-hill with a black hole dead-centered in his white forehead.

So the two buckos felt their money-belts grow fat and sassy, but there was this difference between them when they hit New Orleans for a spree—that Sparhawk hunted the nearest bar to count Dixie dollars between alternate glasses of Crusta and Santini's Pousse-Cafe, while McCargo hunted the nearest park to count Dixie belles between lovers' lanes of cypress bearded with Spanish moss.

It had been a profitable and pleasant vacation—until now.

Now, in the darkest hour before dawn of St. Patrick's Day, McCargo sat at the desk of his suite in the St. Louis Hotel and pushed a spluttering goose-quill across paper while Sparhawk raged up and down the carpet spitting tobacco juice and profanity in all directions.

"Blast and flummadiddle your randy-dandying hide!" *Sp-urt!* "Here's hoping they ventilate your thunder-mugged carcass into a piffery sieve!" *Sp-lash!*

McCargo glanced up briefly from the paper, and the devil in his eye danced a hornpipe with the golden ring that bobbed from his ear. "They'll have a good chance," he said, and went back to his hen-scratching.

After he signed his name and sanded the page, Sparhawk clawed it from the desk, cocked spectacles on his nose, and read:

I, Captain Thunder Bay McCargo, being of sound mind, etc., hereby certify this as my Last Will & Testament, and, on event of my death, bequeath the following:

To Colonel Justus Newberry of the Great Lakes Red Stripe Steamship Line, my fifty-ton schooner the *Minong*, on consideration that Black Pompey and Red Massasauga be given fair shares in said vessel's ventures, plus their wages.

To Widow Hulda Roen Slogvig, my son's nursemaid, such monies and stocks as are held in safekeeping with Papa LeFevre in Detroit; also my ancestral acres and home on Isle Royale; the proceeds from said monies, stocks, and properties to be expended on my son's upbringing and education, and the residue to revert to him on his eighteenth birthday.

To Marie and Yvonne, the LeFevre Twins, my love and such trinkets and baubles as they may choose from my jewel box.

To the Duchess of Mackinac Island, my respects to her genteel establishment of young ladies, my pitchpipe in token of her regard for music, and my sympathy if she ever accepts Sparhawk as a husband.

To Captain Bernard Sparhawk, my ruby-encrusted snuff-box, and I hereby appoint him my Executor.

To my son, my saber, my sword-cane, my Bowie knife, my harakiri dagger, my Lancaster rifle, my Colt Derringers, my duelling pistols, my dog Cormac; all these I pass along, but above all a proud name and a family motto brought from Loch Lomond in the Highlands and Knockadoon Head in County Cork: *Suaviter in Modo, Fortiter in Re*—Mild in Manner, Mighty in Deed—The McCargos!

Line by line Sparhawk lip-read his way through the Last Will & Testament. Then, growling and snorting, he tore it apart, paragraph by paragraph. "In the first place, you ain't of sound mind or you wouldn't have promised to figh half of Noo Orleans, come dawn! Second, Colonel Newberry has troubles enough without worrying about your *Minong*. Third, if that two hundred pounds of six-foot Norsky ever hears about you calling her a nursemaid for *your* son, you'd better be dead! Fourth, the LeFevre twins is twice too much for any man. Fifth, you know consarned well that every gal the Duchess hires is a Molly Turnover; what's more, I've been wedded, bedded, and shedded three times, but it never took, and the Duchess and me are just friends. Sixth, thanks for the snuff-box, but I ain't your executor, you've executed yourself! Seventh, that's a fine arsenal to hand a weanling going on two!"

But when he came to the last couple of lines in the Will, the fierce old steamboat skipper dashed a tear from his bloodshot eye, and quavered: "Can't you beg off? Couldn't we skip town on the *Prairie Dew*?"

"A man who refuses to defend his honor," said McCargo stiffly, "has no honor to defend."

"Fancy words and foofaraw." *Sp-urt!*

"Me, I'd rather be a live rabbit than a dead wildcat." *Sp-lash!*

McCargo stripped to the buff and stretched out on the bed. From toe-tip to crown of orange hair, he measured two axe-handles in length, standard gauge for a frontier giant; lean-hipped and trim-waisted as an Ojibway maiden, he shrugged shoulders to rival a bull-elk and inquired with lazy deceptiveness, "How many cartels have we accepted?"

Sparhawk fished in his weskit. "Fourteen cards count up to fourteen duels," *Sp-urt!* "And even on St. Patrick's Day morning, that's suicide for a lone Irishier." *Sp-lash!*

An evening groggy as a keg of Monongahela swam before McCargo's mind and he winced at vague memories. "Exactly what happened?"

"I wasn't deacon-sober myself, son. We promenaded the bars and drank a Muscovite round of toasts to Andy Jackson and St. Patrick. Along toward shank of night you busted up a private masked ball and demanded to hear the blue-bloods sing because you wanted to find a fourth to round out the *Minong's* quartet."

McCargo groaned. He remembered the exquisite courtesy of Creole gentlemen approaching him one by one, flicking his cheek with white gloves, stepping back, bowing from the waist, proffering cartels. His face burned in embarrassment at the contrast to his own loutish behavior. "Blow out the candle," he told Sparhawk, "and wake me at dim dawn."



AS THE first mother-of-pearl hint of sunrise slipped up over the Delta, the road to the plantation of Louis Alard bore traffic as heavy as Canal Street during carnival time. With a rataplan of hoofs and a whirl of wheels the drays, tilburys, barouches, gigs, and traps streamed out of New Orleans toward the most celebrated duelling grounds in all America. Gentlemen drivers guided the horses, twirling the ribbons with studied nonchalance, while their seconds conferred solemnly and their surgeons worried over bandages and bullet-probers. A liveried groom on the swaying top of a coach-and-four poised a yard of tin to his lips and bugled at daybreak with Tantivy Trot.

McCargo and Sparhawk bowed onto the Allard Plantation in a natty Stanhope rig with high spidery wheels, then walked across the greensward to the grove of live oaks where a thousand blades had clashed and a thousand pistols had cracked in the Code of the Duello. Despite his will-making and the towering odds against him, McCargo strutted in Wellington boots like a peacock spreading its tail, and, in honor of Ireland's patron saint, he wore an emerald beaver, a Kelly-green cutaway with stock and weskit to match, and skin-tight shamrock pantaloons. Rolling in the wake of such finery plowed Sparhawk, sour as pickles for breakfast, in a wrinkled Prince Albert coat topped by a stove-pipe hat with a dented crown. He toted the carved-walnut case of duelling pistols while McCargo flourished his walking-stick colchemarde.

As they approached the gathering of shirt-ruffled Creole dandies under the oak branches, McCargo doffed his beaver in a dew-skinning bow. "Gentlemen, I apologize for last night's buffoonery, but—" he pointed to the brace of matched pistols, then whistled three feet of Toledo steel from the cane-sheath of his colchemarde — "I stand ready to give satisfaction, at your choice in weapons!"

"It's your choice, lunkhead." *Sp-urt!*
 "They challenged, ninny." *Sp-lash!*

While McCargo waited with folded arms and Sparhawk talked to God about "numbskulls polishing each other off with pig-stickers, percussion caps, pistols, and politeness," the Creoles withdrew to a distance, jabbering excitedly in their soft patois. Matters of punctilio concerned them. Each had expected to duel McCargo, but none had known until now that the mad American would select the same dawn to duel all fourteen of them, and grant the choice of weapons besides. Principals conferred with seconds and gray-bearded churgeons were called upon for counsel.

Grave shaking of heads. Great show of Gallic shrugs. No clause in the Code of the Duello had dreamed of anticipating such an extraordinary turn of events. No precedent prevailed. One against fourteen under the Oaks? *Parbleu!* Could there be honor in such numbers? *Je ne sais pas, M'sieu.* What think you?

At last Jose Alvaro, a Spanish Creole favored as the finest sword-arm of New Orleans, agreed with his French Creole friend, Jules Montard, keenest pistol-eye in Dixie, that none of them could back out of the affair now without tainting themselves with cowardice.

"Shed no crocodile tears, *amigos*," warned Jose. "*El Señor McCargo es muy hombre, muy caballero. Quien sabe?* There are two things nobody can control—the weather and the Yankees!"

"Stir your stumps!" bellowed Sparhawk, nervous wreck of sweat and goose bumps. "This blasted sus-pense is killing *me!*" He brandished a hairy cannonball of a fist at the Creoles. "Line up and take your turn or git off the pot!"

The duels began: pistols at twenty paces; cold steel at arm's length. Walk, aim, turn, fire! Lunge, slash, parry, riposte! Sparhawk called out the names on the cards and McCargo measured his man.

Unvarnished facts paint the action better than the gilded lilies an awed reporter for the *Picayune Chronicle* splashed into a frontpage write-up that afternoon. In two hours and thirty-seven minutes, McCargo fought fourteen duels, nine with colchemardes, five with pistols. Seven of his opponents, none of them fatally injured, were carried from the field of honor by their seconds and chirurgions.

At the end, his finery slashed to green ribbons, his emerald beaver perforated in three places, his head patched with plaster to cover a scalp wound, his chest and arms bar-sinistered with sword burns, and his ear dripping blood where wasp-lead had stung him, McCargo leaned on the handle of his colchemarde, the old Heidelberg duelling scar on his cheek stamped white with strain, and breathed a prayer of thanks to St. Patrick.

Then cheering Creoles hoisted his hulk to their shoulders and delivered him to the Stanhope rig. Jose Alvaro, his arm in a sling, cried: "Luncheon at the Absinthe House, *amigo*—don't fail us!" But Jules Montard, his brow turbanned with bandages, paid the supreme compliment: "You duel like a Creole, *mon ami*—not to kill, but to teach more gracious manners."

Sparhawk chirruped to the chestnut cob and tooled leather toward New Or-

leans as if the jaws of a loup-garou were clicking on the tailgate of the Stanhope rig. "Swallowed my last chaw when you grazed grass in that tenth duel," he explained. "Need a re-fill to take the chatter off my cuspids."



THE desk clerk at the St. Louis Hotel had hoop-eyes for McCargo's tattered glory, Peerless Plug for Sparhawk, a pimply face, and identically-worded telegrams for both gentlemen from Colonel Justus Newberry:

ICE BROKEN AT STRAITS OF MACKINAC. LAKES OPEN FOR NAVIGATION. FIRST RED-STRIPER ALREADY STEAMING FROM BUFFALO FOR CHICAGO. AM FIGHTING KREEGER ORANGE-STRIPE FLEET TOOTH AND NAIL FOR SURVIVAL. WISH YOU WERE HERE.

The plaintive appeal seeped under each captain's hide. Colonel Newberry, fixture on the lakes since the Walk-in-the-Water made the first trial run in steam on Lake Erie, was being shoved into bankruptcy, lock, stock, and barrel, by an upstart Eastern newcomer named Mort Kreeger whose sharp business tactics cut corners around his rival's four-square honesty. Toward the close of navigation the previous autumn, Kreeger had been helped by mysterious explosions which had sent Newberry's flagship and his second largest steamboat to the bottom of Lake Huron.

A sample of Kreeger's methods, signed in bold script, was scrawled in pencil across the bottom of each telegram: "*Don't bet on lost causes!*"

While Sparhawk scratched his noggin over the pencil marks, McCargo grabbed the hotel register, ran a finger down the list of late arrivals, and found that Mortimer Kreeger of Buffalo had checked in the night before.

Thoughtfully Sparhawk sprayed nicotine saliva at a potted plant across the lobby. "Must be prowling the river to git more steamboats for his fleet," he decided. "But they're harder to buy than virgins in that genteel establishment the Duchess operates on Mackinac!"

McCargo turned to the hotel clerk. "Any idea how Kreeger obtained access to these telegrams?" The pimply face

went blank, then brightened with greed at glimpse of a big-numbered greenback. "So he bribed you?" said McCargo, re-pocketing the money with Scottish thrift and tossing the clerk by his lapels onto a high chandelier where he kicked and screamed to the accompaniment of jangling glass while the lake captains climbed a plush staircase to their suite.

In preparation for the Creole luncheon at the Absinthe House, McCargo luxuriated in a tin basin, shaved with Lubin's Almond Paste, brushed his teeth with Pelletier's Odontine and Elixir, rubbed his wild orange locks and flaming sideburns with Rowland's Oil of Coral Circassia, and paraded into the sitting room decked out in pearl-buttoned broadcloth with a pink cameo pinned to his bottle-green stock. In scorn of such primping, Sparhawk had dusted his Prince Albert out the window and finger-flecked some sea-gull-guano spots from his dented stovepipe. The peppery sea-dog barked out bad news.

"Ahoy, rainbow-lad." *Sp-urt!* "Your Last Will & Testament is lost, strayed, or stolen." *Sp-lash!*

They topsy-turvied the writing desk, fine-tooth-combed the suite, questioned the chambermaid, and threatened the management, but the document remained missing.

"Must have blown out the window," opined McCargo. "What good would it do anyone else?"

"Listen, son—" Sparhawk pity-eyed him and spoke in tolerant tones reserved for enlightening an idiot child—"excepting Cormac and your yonker and the Duchess, everybody you named in that Will, including me, stands to benefit by your sudden dee-mise. Laugh, loon! but to certain parties you're more valuable dead than alive!"

The picture of Hulda or the LeFevre twins, of Black Pompey or Red Massauga, of Colonel Newberry or Sparhawk trying to murder him, tickled McCargo's funny-bone. "I'll draw up a new will, cutting all of you off without a pistareen, and endow a Foundling Home for Orphaned Manatees."

"Any new will you draw up won't be worth a brass bawbee! You branded that one as your *Last Will & Testament*. It ain't witnessed and it ain't dated, so a

couple of fork-tongued witnesses could be hired and a convenient date put in—say, about a week before your funeral.”

McCargo hummed. “How they holler at the mellerdrummer!” and grinned at the old skipper’s runaway imagination. “I am convinced,” he said in a stage voice embellished with theatrical gestures, “that this is none other than a deep-dyed plot laid by that cursed scoundrel and seducer of sainted womanhood, Mort Kreeger!”

“You’d sing at your own wake.”
Sp-urt! “Let’s go drink lunch.” *Sp-lash!*

CHAPTER II

PANTHER IN PEARL BUTTONS



BY NOON the folklore of a fabulous city already included a tale of fourteen duels under the Oaks, and, as the lake captains strolled toward Bienville and Bourbon Streets, men gave McCargo wide berth on the banquettes while bright eyes and red lips flashed admiration from the iron lacework of overhanging galleries.

Creole huzzahs greeted McCargo’s entry into the Absinthe House. Jose Alvaro and Jules Montard almost challenged each other for the honor of drawing his chair. In a confidential aside that could be heard to Circus Square, Sparhawk remarked, “In this very bar-room me and Gin’ral Andy Jackson and Pirate Jean Lafitte mapped out the Battle of New Orleans over an absinthe frappe.”

As befitted gentlemen the company chose a different wine for each course and lunched lightly on crab and shrimp a la creole, chicken gumbos, fragrant jambalayas, a golden-crisp cochon de lait, a vol-au-vent of oyster stew, Gulf turtle served in its shell, Florida lobster, and Bayou roastbeef with side-dishes of plantation fruits and vegetables, including tomatoes which Sparhawk said would poison every mother’s son of them, while they shuddered as he drained stein after stein of beer made from pineapple peelings, brown sugar, cloves, and rice.

As chicoried coffee and Cuban cheroots were served, a Napoleon-sized figure carrying a black umbrella and fanning himself with a palmetto frond approached McCargo and Sparhawk and asked if he

might have a word with them. Sparhawk blew off steam. “Get out of here, Kreeger! Follow your beak, and don’t stop to blow it!” But McCargo, always anxious to size up an opponent, invited the little man with the pinched power-mad face to sit down. “I’ve heard of you, Mr. Kreeger.”

“Nothing decent from me,” Sparhawk butted in. “Look close, son, and you’ll notice he’s only got one eye that works. But you can tell the true from the false. There’s a gleam of kindness in the glass eye!”

“I understand you don’t believe in gambling on lost causes, Mr. Kreeger,” McCargo said with cold politeness. “My friend and I hold other views. The *Prairie Dew* will head up-river tomorrow morning toward Buffalo!”

“Put that in your pipe.” *Sp-urt!* “And choke on it.” *Sp-lash!*

A glow, cold and pale as a winter moon, touched Kreeger’s face, but he schooled his temper. “I intend to smash Colonel Newberry’s Red Stripe Line and take over control of the Great Lakes this summer,” he said quietly. “Sorry we can’t do business, but the loss is all yours, and I hold no hard feelings. In fact—” he addressed McCargo— “here’s a tip in case you’re still interested in rounding out a ship’s quartet. I bought a small steamboat yesterday and . . . pardon me, gentlemen, would you care for a pinch of snuff?”

They refused the offer but pricked their ears forward for his next words, McCargo intrigued by the mention of “quartet,” Sparhawk by “steamboat.” The shipping magnate let them dangle while he toyed with a snuffbox and applied scented brown dust to his nostrils.

After a dainty sneeze, he continued: “As I was saying, gentlemen, I purchased a small steamboat yesterday—nothing much, but a minor addition to my fleet. Then, for drunk and disorderly conduct last night, I fired an obstreperous deck-hand named Memphis Gator. Now I wish I could get him back because I have since discovered that he’s not only the champion bully of the river, no mean recommendation in itself on rough water, but also a natural-born troubadour—which entitles him to premium wages on the Mississippi just as it does on the Lakes.”

McCargo’s hopes leaped high. Oh, to sail the *Minong* again with four-part

harmony swelling the breeze! "Where can I get in touch with this Memphis Gator?"

"There's the catch, and the reason why I don't go hunting for him myself," Kreeger spread his hands helplessly. "He's holed up in the Swamp on Girod Street, a part of town where the police haven't dared show themselves for twenty years."

Sparhawk jumped flat-footed into the conversation. "You mentioned buying a little teakettle." He coughed, then added eagerly, "Mine ain't hardly more than a boiler on a raft, but if you was heading up-river tomorrow morning—"

"It so happens I am—" Kreeger's red tongue licked out like a copperhead's—"and I'll cover any wagers you want to make on a race to St. Louis!"

McCargo's money belt thudded the table a split second behind Sparhawk's. Kreeger jotted the amounts on the notepaper and then inquired gently if that was all the sporting blood they had.

The Creoles, born gamblers, hung strangely back from the betting. Jose Alvaro pulled McCargo's sleeve and whispered, "*Amigo*, a word with you, please!" and Jules Montard cautioned, "Wait a minute, *mon ami*, *s'il vous plait*!"

But Sparhawk had the floor. "That's all the cash we got." *Sp-urt!* "But I'll bet the *Prairie Dew* against her market price." *Sp-lash!*

"Done!" said Kreeger, and made the entry in his notebook. "See you in St. Louis, gentlemen. I'll be waiting on the levee to collect!"

As his coat-tails flirted out the door, Jose Alvaro and Jules Montard poured a torrent of patois into McCargo's sad ears. "What's flustering them Spiggadies?" said Sparhawk. "The *Prairie Dew* can waggle her stern at any boat on the river except the *Eclipse*."

McCargo gulped cognac, and reached for the bottle. "That's the name of the boat Kreeger bought—the *Eclipse*!"

Sparhawk hit the roof, jumping. "Betrayed!" he roared. "Bamboozled, flummoxed, and beaten around the mulberry by that leather-hatted, double-vatted, slippery-slatted limb of Satan on the wrong side of the canoodling bed!"

Inconsolable at thought of losing the *Prairie Dew*, he stormed the floor of the Absinthe House until McCargo pegged

him to a chair and beckoned the waiter. Sparhawk boggled at the apron. "Bring me water." *Sp-urt!* "I aim to catch cholera." *Sp-lash!*

McCargo passed an affectionate arm around the Downeaster's shoulders, but Sparhawk shook it off and growled, "Leave me to my penance!" Without flinching he drank a naked glass of water and called the waiter. "Bring me another straight shot of stuff." *Sp-urt!* "Here's to yellow sickness and the bubonic plague." *Sp-lash!*

Creoles crowded around, pointing out loopholes in wagers made under false pretenses, but it was characteristic of the lakemen that they would no more consider backing out of a bad bet with Kreeger than they would think of ignoring Colonel Newberry's cry-for-help telegram. With a code of honor as stern and rock-ribbed as Lake Superior's coast, they unhesitatingly fulfilled their obligations to friend and foe alike.

While Sparhawk swam in despair, McCargo buttonholed the Creoles. Was it true what Kreeger had said about Memphis Gator?

Mais oui, M'sieu, even the wharf-rats squeaked his name in the same breath with that of Mike Fink and Annie Christmas. *Un tonnerre a la voile*, this Memphis Gator, an unruly rascal, with a voice to charm honey from bees. *Si Señor, es verdad*, but a trip into the Swamp, a walk along Girod Street in search of him? *Perdido!* There were pleasanter ways to die! In the half dozen blocks of the Swamp, *señor*, a man could obtain a drink, a *bonna roba*, and a bed for one picayune—and get throat-slit or skull-crushed in his sleep for another. If you value your life at six-pence, *mi amigo, mon ami*, stay way from Girod Street!

McCargo listened courteously, thanked them in elegant language for grand entertainment and excellent advice, then departed the Absinthe House with Sparhawk in tow. After a visit to the *Prairie Dew* where Black Pompey and Red Massauga kneeled the coin-littered deck cash-instructing a cursing engine-room gang in the art of rolling African bones and Ottawa stones, they headed up from the water front with the patient Cormac at their heels.



SO IT happened that, on St. Patrick's Day in the afternoon, two men and a dog invaded the vice-rottened heart of the wickedest city in the world. McCargo strode like a panther in pearl buttons, Sparhawk stumped along in peculiar style with his right leg stiff as a ramrod, and Cormac scouted alien smells with the tolerant arrogance of his breed—"Gentle when stroked, fierce when provoked."

They entered an area chockablock with saloons, dance-halls, gambling dens, and bordellos. Shacks with low gable roofs and built of rough cypress planks or lumber from forgotten flatboats crouched against the street, a red curtain at every window, a red lantern at every door—traps and dives and dens, foul with the stench of stale whiskey, rank perfume, unwashed bodies, and last week's fish.

The Swamp drew the dregs of existence. Men scarred by conflict and branded with the mark of Cain swaggered through the throng, conscious of no law beyond that of pistol, knife, or bludgeon; of swinging fists, stomping feet, or sharp-filed teeth. A high yaller gal walked raddy past McCargo, her hips swinging an invitation and her eyes offering bargains, while a gap-toothed harridan tried to sell her poxy favors to Sparhawk for a pistareen.

At the House of Rest for Weary Boatmen, an optimistic name for a resort of mayhem and murder, they elbowed into a sardine-welter of cut-purses, footpads, fire-bugs, strumpets, and plug-uglies to reach a bar made of boards laid across kegs. After gawking at Cormac, a drunk pushed his glass aside and muttered, "When a bloke starsh sheeing dogs the shize of dragons, ish time to quit!" Sparhawk ordered Nongela Rye and got instead the Barrel-house Belly-whip, a blend of neutral spirits, creosote and sulphuric acid. McCargo asked for information about Memphis Gator, and the stogie-chewing barkeep regarded him almost with pity. "Try the Sure Enuf Hotel—and don't say I didn't warn ya!"

Half a block from the Sure Enuf Hotel they slowed their steps as a stocky figure catapulted from the door of that guzzle-shop and lurched down Girod Street toward them singing in a high-pitched voice unnatural to his size, the challenge of the

riverboat champion. "I'm looking for the bully, the bully of the town; I'm looking for the bully, but the bully can't be found. And when I walk this levee round, I'm looking for the bully of the town!"

The crowd gave way before him as snow melts to a chinook wind. He hove into clearer view, a hulking hogshead of a man almost as broad as he was tall, his huge thumbs hitched in a belt like a cooper's hoop. From his hat fluttered a red turkey feather, the badge of honor to show his unbeaten status along the Mississippi; and his heavy brogans, studded with spikes, flashed wickedly as he stamped the street.

Cormac, King of Irish Wolfhounds, growled low in the throat and his hackles rose still as porcupine quills; Sparhawk took an extra-big chaw of Peerless Plug; but McCargo, delighted with Memphis Gator's voice, cried, "There's my man—and may the saints be praised!"

"Don't praise 'em." *Sp-urt*. "Pray to 'em." *Sp-lash*!

McCargo blocked the bully's path. "I'm pleased to offer you a job as deckhand on the schooner *Minong*, with bonus pay for joining my ship's quartet."

"Fight you for it!" squealed Memphis Gator, and, in the custom of his kind, began jack-jumping and war-whooping around McCargo, making ferocious faces to match his blood-curdling boasts and taunts. The childish display of bravado aroused no laughter. From the Missouri and the Ohio to the Gulf, this was the normal preliminary to a fist-fracas and the wild men of the rivers could match their words with deeds in rough-and-tumble.

All Girod Street swarmed in a ring to witness the brawl. McCargo stripped to an hour-glass waist and Cormac guarded the pearl-buttoned duds with bared fangs. Sparhawk took the limp and stiffness from his walk by pulling back his Prince Albert and yanking a blunderbuss from its hiding place between his armpit and his trouser-leg. He levelled the scattergun at the Swampers. "This here's the Marquis of Queensberry." *Sp-urt*! "Fair play bespoken with broken glass and rusty spikes." *Sp-lash*!

Memphis Gator clicked his heels together and screamed, "I'm a child of the snapping-turtle, I was raised by crocodiles

and weaned on a catamount's milk. I'm a pizen wolf from Bitter Creek and it's my time to howl. I can wrestle a buffalo, chaw the ears off a grizzly, give a cotton-mouth first bite, and knock down and drag out any nuisance in the nation!"

"Cut out the cackle." *Sp-urt!* "And git to the fight." *Sp-lash!*

Bull-bellowing, Memphis Gator charged his man with a boa-constrictor arm swinging like the swipple of a flail. McCargo side-stepped with the ease of a ballet-

master and pile-drove his right into an already caulflowered ear.

As first blows thudded home, betting odds shouted by the Swampers offered ten to one against the lakeman who had the edge in height but lacked the caribou beam and gorilla reach of his opponent. Sparhawk, remembering McCargo's educational teens on the Continent when he had

McCargo's fists remodelled Memphis Gator's features like the chipping mallets of a sculptor.



boxed Tom Cribb, Champion of England, with muffers or mawlies, covered all bets.

But he winced as Memphis Gator in a windmill onslaught stretched McCargo three yards across Girod Street, then hurled his bulk feet-first at the prostrate body, his spiked brogans gleaming death. McCargo rolled, grabbed at an ankle like a tree trunk, and brought the bully down. They writhed in the dust with Memphis Gator's thumb gouging at McCargo's eye and his teeth hungry for ears. A low insect hum of expectation came from the crowd, but McCargo broke a hammerlock and staggered upright.

They squared off, hammer and tongs. Memphis Gator landed a haymaker that put staring knuckle-marks on the satin ripple of McCargo's brisket, and received in return a pole-axing left that sent blood gushing from his nostrils.

"That uncorked his claret, son." *Sp-urt!* "Now bust his box of dominoes and set his kettle singing." *Sp-lash!*

Memphis Gator's breath came in bubbling gasps; he had bellows to mend. Bloodshot eyes glittering like red glass, he lunged for a crippling hold, and McCargo cross-buttocked him to a fall that shook the Mississippi Basin, then waited politely for him to get up.

"By the green ghost of St. Patrick—" he laughed for sheer joy of battle—"come to the fair!"

The fighting blood snaked out in leechy veins on Memphis Gator's brows, but he went like an ox to the slaughter. McCargo ducked wild punches while he landed rib-benders and stung the bully's huge carcass into lumps with waspish jabs. His leg-of-mutton fists remodelled Memphis Gator's features like the chipping mallets of a sculptor and his final uppercut to the jaw carried the crack of a blackthorn stick.

Sparhawk pointed his blunderbuss and collected his bets. McCargo lifted a tin dipper of whiskey to the battered lips of the riverman. "Ready to talk business?"

"We've talked." Memphis Gator waggled a wobbly jaw. "You've just shipped a new hand, Cap'n McCargo."

Happy as a quartet singing Buffalo Gals, McCargo helped him up and clapped his shoulder. "Pack your duffle, Memphis, and meet us at the St. Louis Hotel for supper."

Sparhawk watched the bedraggled river champion weave up Girod Street toward the Sure Enuf Hotel. His sea-blue eyes darted suspicion. "There's a spiled oyster in the barrel," he told McCargo. "How come that there jasper knew your name?"

McCargo shrugged. "You must have yelled it out during the fight."

"Mebbe so, and mebbe not." *Sp-urt!* "If not—Low Bridge!" *Sp-lash.* "And if that chawbacon could warble sweeter than Jenny Lind I still wouldn't like the cut of his jib. I'm warning you, son—keep a weather eye peeled for squalls!"

"Calamity howler," scoffed McCargo. "And him with a voice to shatter wine-glasses and shame boy-sopranos!"

CHAPTER III

VOODOO MEETING



AT SUPPER in the main banquet room of the St. Louis Hotel, Memphis Gator blew his nose on the napkin and drank from the finger bowl but gave no other cause for doubt or complaint, and Sparhawk couldn't object to his table manners because the Downeasterner had a trick of sliding black-eyed peas into his mouth with a knife.

Afterwards, McCargo led the way upstairs, carrying a bottle of Waterloo port, vintage of '15, full-blooded stuff cobwebby from the cellar; and, while Sparhawk stared somberly at his glass of tawny-purple wine and saw nightmares of Kreeger's *Eclipse* trouncing the *Prairie Dew* up-river, the master of the *Minong* spliced his baritone to the bully-boy's high notes in a songfest: I'm Sitting on the Rail, Dinah; Way Down In Cairo; Julius from Kentucky; and—

Charleston is a pretty place,
De gals dey kiss so sweet,
Dey am so slender 'bout de waist,
And dress so very neat;
But I'd rather kiss my Nell,
Dan all de gals I ever see,
Cuz her breath is like
An orange blossom hanging on a tree.

Cormac kept time with a pile-driving tail, but Sparhawk cursed the caterwauling. "Your Last Will & Testament is

missing! Kreeger's got us where the hair is tight! Colonel Newberry's hollering for help! We've got to beat the *Eclipse* to Saint Looney or go bust! You've just hired Jonah for a deck hand! And there you sit like a seasick calf—" he misfired and sprayed tobacco juice on the windowsill—"with a tune in your throat and no git-up-and-bounce in your butt!"

Before McCargo could reply, Jose Alvaro and Jules Montard burst into the suite and added to Sparhawk's catalogue of woes. Make haste, *mon ami*, our swords and pistols are at your service! *Muy pronto, amigo* and there still may be time to save your blackamoor and copper savage!

As four matched grays whirled a swaying barouche out of New Orleans toward Lake Pontchartrain, the Creoles told how Mort Kreeger had been overheard in a bar, boasting that he had bribed rascally overseers of neighboring plantations to stage a raid, complete with leg-chains and bloodhounds, on Marie Laveau's Voodoo meeting which Black Pompey and Red Massasauga attended once a week. Such gatherings, although tolerated by custom, were forbidden by planter's law. Punishment was swift, severe, sometimes fatal. In the case of the Negro and of the Indian, Kreeger had paid in advance for two dead men.

McCargo felt the livid S-S scar on the palm of his right hand where a smoking Pensacola iron had branded him a Slave-Stealer for sending Black Pompey north over the Underground Railroad. In imagination his canoe again rounded Laughing Fish Point on Lake Superior to where painted Dacotahs jabbed fiery splinters into Red Massasauga. No crusader, he had freed the Georgian field-hand for a tenor that sweetened the savannahs; he had saved the missionary-schooled Ottawa for the Big Ben bass on his death chant.

As the matched grays skimmed the velvet road and the barouche careened around the last bend to Lake Pontchartrain, his knuckles cracked impatience but his mouth spoke philosophy. "Understand men, gentlemen—I despise a scrawny abolitionist as much as I hate a trafficker in human flesh. America is the same as a turkey, with white and dark meat. They may differ in color, but they are both

vitaly important to the national bird. By the black beards of Blarney—" his anxiety broke the bonds of polished talk as he saw a red glow bathe the clouds above Lake Pontchartrain—"and were these horses bred from snails!"

Tom-toms spoke in the night, a bonfire leaped beyond a hedge of thickets, a white house leaned back from the road, and Jose Alvaro sawed the matched grays to a prancing halt while Jules Montard jumped to hold the snorting leaders' heads. "Calm yourself, *mon ami*, this is the Maisson Blanche of Marie Laveau, headquarters of the Voodoo Queen, and we have arrived in time!"

The Creoles, the lakemen, the river bully, and the Wolfhound named for an Irish King—an army of six to repel invasion—skirted the window-dark white house and stole through the thicket to where a ring of yellow moon looked down on the Black Magic of Africa.

"Don't spoil their fun," whispered McCargo, his eyes and ears keened to the spell of Voodoo. "We've cut off attack by road, and we'll wait for the raiders."

They settled in the shadows and watched the weird rites of an ancient jungle religion. Thigh-bones beat on a skin-covered cask and glistening figures carved from ebony hunkered and swayed in a circle about the boiling cauldron over the fire. Zombi, the holy serpent, hissed and writhed in his ornamented box set on a gilded altar.

Red Massasauga in breech-clout and bear-claw necklace and Black Pompey in scarlet turban and loin-cloth dwarfed the big bucks around them and drew candid glances from slave girls clad in flimsy to show the naked boldness of their breasts.

Thigh-bones quickened beat on the skin-covered cask. The air went pulse-mad. A banana-colored woman whirled into the center of the circle and vaulted to the top of the snake box. With a blue cord looped about her waist and tiny bells tinkling on her ankles, she danced with a live fish as if currents of electricity were passing through her body.

"Marie Laveau!" Jules Montard crossed himself. "The Voodoo Witch!"

Shaking her lips she splash-tossed the fish into the bubbling cauldron, then flung out her arms to embrace the black sky, and

her head rolled on her shoulders as if her neck were broken. A scream rippled from her throat and she started the chant: "*Eh! Eh! Bomba hen hen!*"

The swaying circle joined hands and a current of Power convulsed them as they responded, "*Eh! Eh! Bomba hen hen!*" in words that had no meaning but in a rhythm that became a drug. Glistening bucks seized loose-limbed slave wenches in pagan dances, and it came to McCargo that he might be seeing and hearing the steps and music of tomorrow.

Sparhawk cackled. "Wisht I was forty again." *Sp-urt!* "Or even a young fifty." *Sp-lash!*

Brush rustled behind them. "*Amigos!*" warned Jose Alvaro, and pointed toward the road where a dozen burly overseers approached on horseback, with a pack of bloodhounds snuffing and straining at the leash. The glint of moonlight on metal showed that the raiders were armed to the teeth, but McCargo had no stomach for an ambush. As his own men cocked pistols and flashed swords, he stepped into plain view and called, "Back to your dung-hills! This party is private!"

"Get him!" roared the leader. Putting spurs to his horse he tried a snapshot at McCargo and unleashed the bloodhounds in full cry.

Sparhawk's blunderbuss punctured jagged holes in the night. Broken glass and rusty spikes took the heart and tore the hide out of the attackers. Cormac met the bloodhounds head-on and tang-slashed them to ribbons until the remnants of a pack yelped down the road after Kreeger's shrapnel-cowed hirelings.

There were other details to the Battle of Lake Pontchartrain but those were the important points, and, later in the *Maison Blanche*, Marie Laveau served her guests steaming bowls of tafia, the ritual rum, and insisted on giving McCargo a special gris-gris. Into a bag made from the shroud of a person who had been buried nine days, she placed a one-eyed toad, a shark's tooth, a dried lizard, a wax doll stuck with pins, the little finger of a quadroon who had committed suicide, the wings of a bat, the eyes of a black cat, the liver of an owl, and the heart of a rooster. She muttered mumbo-jumbo over the charm while Cormac sniffed the bag until his

hackles rose and he backed stiff-legged to a corner where he pawed the floor and whined in fear.

"Keep this always with you," advised the banana-skinned Voodoo Queen with the gypsy eyes. "Mc, I am Marie Laveau. I make gris-gris, I make conjure-balls, I make wangas, but this one carries the Power."

McCargo murmured his thanks and accepted the gift gingerly; Memphis Gator's derisive laugh cancelled out Cormac's frightened whine; but Sparhawk had the last word. "If it's got the power to git us to Saint Looey ahead of the *Eclipse*, I don't care how it stinks up the *Prairie Dew!*"



CROWDS jammed the levee next morning to see the start of the race. Wads of greenbacks were flourished in support of the *Eclipse*, but there were few takers even at long odds. After one look at Kreeger's floating palace, with its huge boilers and great sidepaddles, those who wanted the underdog to win held nothing but scared money in their pockets.

McCargo located Kreeger by the gangplank of the *Eclipse* and the devil danced in his eye as the ship magnate tried to scuttle away. "You're too small for my fists," he said, grabbing him by the coat-tails, "and not gentleman enough for my duelling pistols. We enjoyed your entertainment last night and only regret your absence. Now—" his forefinger stabbed into a thin chest—"shall we settle on rules for the conduct of this race?"

The winter-moon glow touched Kreeger's power-mad face and his glass eye winked in the sun. "Rules are for fools. First boat in collects all bets."

McCargo relayed the news to Sparhawk in the *Prairie Dew's* pilot house and the Downeasterner trotted on deck to bawl orders through his megaphone. "No holds barred, huh? All we need is an eagle to fly us." *Sp-urt!* "Or a jumbo catfish to tow us." *Sp-lash!* "HEAVE OFF, BLAST YOUR BONES! STEP LIVELY BELOW!"

Pandemonium hit the levee and the only sound missing was the familiar, "All dat ain't goin', please to git asho'," because neither boat would accept passengers, and

the only extra weight the *Prairie Dew* carried was a new suit of sails for the *Minong* and a Voogloo gris-gris for McCargo.

Columns of black smoke poured from the twin stacks of each racing packet. Bells jangled, the crowd split its throat, handkerchiefs fluttered, Creoles pelted flowers at the lakemen, deckhands hauled in stageplanks. Paddlewheels turning and spray flying, the *Prairie Dew* and the *Eclipse* backed into the river, and, water foaming, straightened upstream bound for Natchez, Memphis, St. Louis and the north star.

They were abreast as they slid past the city, but the *Prairie Dew* soon fell astern and took the wash of the *Eclipse's* paddles while Sparhawk glowered at the wheel and McCargo tried to hearten the engine-room crew with an old racing song from his new quartet. They piled into split-voice ballading as Memphis Gator's high notes soared above the chorus and McCargo, Black Pompey, and Red Massasauga lent harmonic support.

For we'll give her a little more rosin,
And open her blower wide,
To show them the way to Natchez,
Running against the tide.
Oh, a little more rosin, do,
A little more pitch and pine!
Throw in a can of glycerine
And a barrel of turpentine.

The *Prairie Dew* broke the old record to Natchez in eleven hours flat, but the *Eclipse* had set a new mark to shoot at and was fifteen minutes ahead. They picked up cord-wood and Sparhawk scratched his poll when McCargo bought a cartload of tall tamarack saplings. "Fixing to pole us upstream, son?"

The tamarack lay useless on the deck for two days. It was thirteen hundred miles from New Orleans to St. Louis and the *Prairie Dew* lagged an hour behind the *Eclipse* at Halfway Point when McCargo, standing a night trick at the wheel felt a puff of air stir the nape of his neck.

At first daylight Sparhawk rolled out on deck and almost went back to his bunk because he figured it for an unfinished dream. The *Prairie Dew* had fire in her belly and a fresh south wind in her jerry-rigged sails. With the *Minong's* new suit of canvas flying from tamarack masts and

smoke belching from her stacks; her paddlewheels clocked three extra knots an hour and she bowled upriver to overtake the *Eclipse* at Memphis and show the foam of her wake to Kreeger's glass eye.

"Ahoy, turtle!" *Sp-lash!* "Make way for an eagle!" *Sp-lash!*

A swimming volcano with wings, the *Prairie Dew* surged ahead and held the lead until there were only two fueling stations to go before St. Louis. Then the wind died and a dead calm gripped the river and the limp sails were a handicap instead of a help and they went tumbling down under McCargo's command as the *Eclipse* crept up from behind and nosed out the *Prairie Dew* to the second-last fueling station.

Sparhawk blew for a landing but McCargo yelled, "Keep her steady as she goes!" and the Downeasterner shook his head sadly at an orange-haired lunatic hefting a double-bladed axe. "She won't go nowhere without fuel, son!"

"Handle the wheel and we'll furnish the fuel," said McCargo, and his axe bit into the passenger cabins while Memphis Gator and Black Pompey and Red Massasauga hustled furniture from the main saloon to the engine-room gang.

With safety valves tied down and a wrecking crew at work, the *Prairie Dew* went non-stop to St. Louis and set a record that stood until the *Robert E. Lee* made the run in three days, eighteen hours, and fourteen minutes. Church bells and whistles clamored the news as jammed levees gaped at a once-gaudy packet whit-tled down to a boiler on a raft with Sparhawk spinning the wheel from the naked ruins of a pilot house.

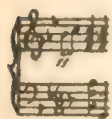
The *Eclipse* docked five minutes later and the lakemen were waiting at the gang-plank to collect their bets. Kreeger paid off without a word, but, as Sparhawk told the harbormaster, "He was writhing like a devil in a holy-water basin, and even his glass eye was bloodshot with rage."

The harbormaster had come aboard with two telegrams in his pocket and now he delivered them. They were from Colonel Newberry and contained one stark word: "HURRY!"

Being an old crony of Sparhawk, the harbormaster already had read the telegrams. He hauled out a three-day old Chi-

cago paper. "Reckon you'd better look this over."

Headlines screamed: EMPRESS OF BURMA BLOWN UP IN LAKE HURON! TRAGIC LOSS OF LIFE! THIRD STEAMBOAT DISASTER IN SEVEN MONTHS STRIKES RED STRIPE LINE! OUTRAGED PUBLIC DEMANDS INVESTIGATION! SURVIVORS HINT NEGLIGENCE, CARELESSNESS! COLONEL NEWBERRY FACES LAWSUITS FROM NEXT OF KIN!



THE *Prairie Dew* churned north. She barged through the new canal linking the Mississippi to Lake Michigan, and when she berthed at a Chicago shipyard for repairs her skippers had sleep-starved eyes like cigar burns in a trading blanket.

"See that they put some fancy meat on her skeleton," Sparhawk told his engine-room gang, and boarded a coach on rails to scowl and sputter at McCargo's quartet which whiled away the ten-hour, spine-jolting trip to Detroit by harmonizing the Bullgine Song: "*Railroad trabble's getting all de go, Cuz de hoss boat and de steam boat goes so awful slow!*"

From the Michigan Central Depot in Detroit, Sparhawk took Red Massasauga and Black Pompey toward the waterfront to ready-up the *Minong* for a Buffalo voyage, while McCargo, with Cormac at his heels and Memphis Gator by his side, strode up Beaubien Street to see his son and to ask Papa LeFevre's advice.

The twins saw him coming, and from hammocks under the great pear trees ankle-flashed to greet him with honey-suckle arms and rosebud lips.

"Lassies!" groaned the scandalized McCargo. "Your husbands!"

"Poof!" mocked Marie, with a tolerant side-glance at two graybeards dozing over a chessboard in the shade. "We have marry them only for your own convenience!"

"And because," pouted Yvonne, "it was impossible for you to marry both of us!"

Giggling they led him into the house, and he welcomed the restraining influence of Hulda Roen Slogvig and Papa LeFevre. The good habitant regarded McCargo as one of the family and had arranged for

Hulda to become his housekeeper while she reared McCargo's son.

"By Yumping Yimminy!" the Val-kyrian Norsky beamed as an orange-haired tot toddled into the room. "Hay ess vun fine strapping fellow, mine Olaf!"

A McCargo named Olaf! The master of the *Minong* gritted his teeth and glared, but there was nothing he could say to this Brunhilde who stood almost as tall as himself in her black peasant shoon and whose breastworks dented a flowered Hardanger corselet.

Hulda was McCargo's problem and Sparhawk's fault. Her son had been still-born on Mackinac Island not many hours after Patier leade McCargo had died in child-birth to end McCargo's search for a wet-nurse, Sparhawk and the Duchess had substituted the live infant for the dead one while Hulda lay in a coma brought on by labor pains and delivery. McCargo, his mind at ease, had sailed for Isle Royale; Hulda had awakened and mistaken the infant for her own; Sparhawk and the Duchess had put off breaking the bad news and had let her think what she wanted; and McCargo had returned from Isle Royale to face the dilemma: Could he tell a young widow that the baby she loved and nursed as her own belonged to him?

A thousand times he had hardened his heart to speak the brutal truth, but now almost two years had passed and he knelt on the floor playing games and pulling Louisiana toys from his pockets for an Irish lad with a Scandihoovian handle.

"Lunch!" announced Hulda from the kitchen in a Bow-bell voice that carried the invitation to Canada, and she rattled off the menu. "*Kjottkaker, rullepølse, sildesalat, stekt lax, lefse, und stikkelsbaer pylse.*"

They sat down to a kind of table-served smorgasbord and Memphis Gator won Hulda's smiling approval by plowing his way through Norwegian meat balls, collared beef, escalloped herring, potato and anchovy salad, and flatbrod. But it was when the hogshead-shaped behemoth asked for a third helping of her gooseberry pudding that she reacted to the calf-eyes he'd been making.

"You bane like mine Olaf!" she cried in delight. "Always so hungry!"

Vaguely annoyed by the by-play, Mc-

CHAPTER IV

MASTER OF THE MINONG



Cargo frowned in disgust when the river bully, like a bashful schoolboy smitten with puppy love, volunteered to help clear the table and wash dishes. Glad to be released from chores, the twins scampered away while their graybeards tottered back to the chessboard. Pape LeFevre filled two brandy glasses with golden fragrance of fermented pears and McCargo asked his advice on how to help Colonel Newberry.

The fragile hands of the old habitant warm-cupped his glass and thin nostrils quivered in connoisseur-appreciation of the brandy's bouquet. "Me, I inquire of myself why three Red Stripe steamboats blow up in Lake Huron. I have known lightning to strike three, four, a dozen times in the same place, but it remains a coincidence I do not like. These are large waterways, my friend—I need not remind you—and the run from Buffalo to Chicago covers four lakes, three rivers, and one strait. Accidents should not be limited to one part of one lake, *n'est-ce pas?*"

McCargo had mulled that very point. If carelessness or negligence had caused these accidents, Red Stripe ships should have been exploding from the toe of Erie to the mouth of Michigan, from Black Rock to the Shifting Dunes. The stem of the brandy glass snapped between his fingers; he clapped on his beaver and strode for the door, calling to Cormac and Memphis Gator.

"Have a care for yourself," the old habitant farewelled. "And *bon voyage!*"

McCargo approached his schooner as a man makes advances to his beloved after long absence. His eyes caressed her trim lines; his hand blew a kiss to the mermaid on her bow; his beaver saluted her raffee topsails, the tri-cornered birthmark of the Lakes.

There were girls to be had in every port, but only one *Minong*.

With the lilt of a Baltimore Clipper she sweethearted across Lake Erie toward Buffalo, showing her heels to everything in sails, and—it might have been whim or it might have been the Irish blood-belief in fays and banshees and wee folk—McCargo nailed to the mainmast his Voodoo gris-gris while Cormac backed away in terror and Memphis Gator loud-laughed his scorn of the supernatural.

WHEN Sparhawk and McCargo walked into his Buffalo office Colonel Newberry welcomed them as if they carried a

death-sentence reprieve. His hair was whiter than they remembered and his fingers fluttered nervously as he answered questions.

"Of course I carry insurance, but the money won't buy ships as good as the ones I've lost, and, besides, it's all tied up in court fighting lawsuits brought on by Kreeger's lying rumors of criminal negligence." He pounded the desk in a piping rage. "Gentlemen, my boats are provided with every safety precaution, all equipment is checked for each trip, my officers and men are hand-picked and trustworthy beyond doubt—and yet some diabolical influence is at work!"

The man whom Kreeger had sworn to ruin heaved a sigh and seemed to shrink within his clothes. "I'm sending out the *Princess Eugenie* today, bound around for Buffalo, and if she runs into bad luck I'm a bankrupt has-been." His voice broke. "For God's sake, gentlemen, do something! I'm counting on you!"

McCargo made no promises. "I want the names and whereabouts of all officers and men who survived the explosions, and of all captains, mates, and engineers who have made safe runs for you since the first boat blew up last fall."

With Colonel Newberry's scribbled list in his pocket, McCargo shouldered a path through the waterfront crowds for Sparhawk. They inspected the *Princess Eugenie* from stem to stern and found neither the discarded danger of oil-soaked rags nor the open menace of varnish cans. The Red Stripe boat was spick-and-span. Even her boiler rooms, stacked neatly with cord-wood, were, in Sparhawk's words, "whistle-clean as the kitchen of a square-head's housefrau."

Later, in Buffalo and in Black Rock, McCargo sought out men whose names were on his list and, as the *Minong* followed the *Princess Eugenie* across the lakes, he stopped at wayside ports to question others. When they pulled into

Masses of cloud swallowed the world as the storm exploded across a thousand miles of prairie and pine to tear at the lake.



Fort Gratiot at the entrance to Lake Huron, his mind held only scattered bits of a puzzle, but, after talking to a horizon-eyed captain who had made a safe run and to a grizzled engineer who had traded a leg for a stump and an arm for a hook in the second Red Stripe disaster, he raced back to the *Minong* and fear shook his voice into a shout: "All hands make sail! We've got to overhaul the *Princess Eugenie*! She's half an hour up Huron and headed straight for Hell!"

The morning sun blotted out and dirty weather loomed as the *Minong* took a bone in her teeth across Saginaw Bay. McCargo called a council of war around the wheel and told his crew what he had learned. All three Red Stripe steamers had blown up several miles beyond Slocum's Landing; all three had put in there to take on cord-wood; all Red Stripe steamers with safe runs to their credit since last fall had failed to stop at Slocum's Landing.

Sparhawk argued. "You're barking up the wrong tree, son. Slocum's straight!"

"He sold out late last summer to three brothers named Farcas." McCargo strained his eyes for sight of the *Princess Eugenie*. "Nobody knows anything about them, except that they sell cord-wood and corn whiskey."

"The dirty, rotten, misbegotten jackals hired by Kreeger." *Sp-urt!* "But how do they blow up ships from shore?" *Sp-lash!*

"I have an idea, but it will keep," said McCargo, and he talked to the *Minong* as if she were a living thing. "Hurry, lass, hurry!"

The gallant little schooner, racing against steam, would have made up the thirty minutes and warned the *Princess Eugenie* before the Red Striper touched at Slocum's Landing, but the weather came between and forbade a rescue.

McCargo handled the helm and his heart sank into his Wellington boots as he saw the first warnings. Hen-scratched clouds yielded to thunderheads. Waves kicked up, the wind died flat for a few seconds, then shifted a full 180 degrees.

A low moan came across the water and Black Pompey stretched out his pink palm toward the Voodoo gris-gris while Red Massasauga offered a twist of tobacco to Lake Huron. In that low moan their superstitious souls recognized the Carcagne, a storm hag with bat wings and a wolf's head which howled just before ships went down on the Great Lakes.

Anvil-shaped masses of cloud swallowed the world. The storm leaped with panther strides, exploding across a thousand miles of prairie and pine, to tear at the lake, and forked lightning was the bloody slash of its claws and thunder was an animal roar in its throat.



ON LEGS as firm as an oak table, McCargo fought the wheel, lashed by hail and rain, as the lake reared up on its hind-ends and lunged at the *Minong* with thirty-foot shoulders of waves. He fought for every foot of sail that Sparhawk ordered hauled down—"To keep the sticks in her, son!"—and gave up hope only when he glimpsed an empty dock at Slocum's Landing through scud and foam streaks.

But still he drove the *Minong* forward,

riding into the teeth of the gale, and it was no fault of his that they came too late on the floating coffin of the *Princess Eugenie* just as her burning hulk slid stern-first to the bottom.

The storm lulled and the *Minong* circled, all eyes straining for survivors, but all they saw were charred bodies awash on the beach and splintered debris in the water until McCargo cried out for Black Pompey to take the wheel, and fished a four-foot length of cord-wood, plump as a fat lady's thigh, onto the deck.

With flame licking through the smoke of his gray eyes, he borrowed Red Massasauga's hatchet to show Sparhawk how four Red Stripe steamboats had been blown up at Kreeger's command to send Colonel Newberry into bankruptcy. The log, at first glance a harmless piece of fuel, had been split, hollowed out in the middle, crammed with gunpowder, and sealed with tar.

Sparhawk stared and went for his blunderbuss. "I got a date with three brothers who ain't long for this world." *Sp-urt!* "Let's git to Slocum's Landing." *Sp-lash!*

In a drizzle of rain the *Minong* breasted the vacant dock. A silo stood back from the rows of cord-wood, a tiny steam-tug rolled at mooring in a creek that threaded the property, and Slocum's old cabin dotted the clearing.

Five men and an Irish Wolfhound, with McCargo in the lead and Memphis Gator bringing up the rear, surprised the Farcas Brothers playing cards and swigging from a demijohn of corn whiskey. But the river bully pulled the real upset and turned the tables. As he closed the door behind him, he snatched the blunderbuss from Sparhawk's hands and trained it on McCargo's crew.

"Grab them, boys!" he yelled to the Farcas Brothers. "I'm a Kreeger man myself!"

The sun came out later in the afternoon and peered through broken clouds at the *Minong* as she was towed out into the lake by a tiny steam-tug with Cormac howling from the cabin and McCargo, Sparhawk, Red Massasauga and Black Pompey trussed up on deck and rope-married to the anchor like poultry ready for market.

Memphis Gator amused himself by kicking them in the ribs and boasting, while

two of the Farcas Brothers—slabsided louts with beards as black as their hearts—spilled barrel upon barrel of shelled corn into the schooner's hold.

"I been keeping tabs on you for Kreeger," Memphis Gator bragged. "He told me when you got too close to the secret to kill you off in the way that would hurt the most—by sinking your ship under you! And what am I getting for a pay-off?" He flourished McCargo's Last Will & Testament. "A ticket to Easy Street with Hulda Roen Slogvig! As the only survivor of the shipwrecked *Minong*, I'm going back to Detroit and marry all that money and property she inherits from you!"

The bully's brogan nudged McCargo's sore ribs and he thrust the Will under McCargo's nose. "Don't worry. This'll be witnessed and dated proper, and I'll give it to her and say it was your dying wish for the both of us to get hitched in double harness." Memphis Gator whooped and chortled. "Then, when I get tired of that big hunk of loving and I've got my claws on the cash, I'll brain the brat and get rid of Hulda—but you won't care, brother, you'll be feeding fishes!"

The Heidelberg scar flared on McCargo's cheek and through the gag he pushed muffled sounds that might have been oaths or prayers. Sparhawk strained at the ropes that bound him. Black Pompey's eyes rolled porcelain-white. Red Massauga faced his manitou with an obsidian stare.

The *Minong's* hold took the last barrel of shelled corn, then the Farcas Brothers formed a bucket-brigade with Memphis Gator to slosh it with water. As they wetted the golden stuff down, it seemed to come alive, and the lakemen turned pallid beneath their tan.

The river bully yelled to the third Farcas in the steam-tug, "This is far enough! We're out of the regular ship-lane! Stand by, we're coming aboard!"

They covered the brim-full hold tightly and Memphis Gator's cheerful voice comforted his victims. "You know what's going to happen. Like a chick breaking through its shell, like rice boiling over on a stove, that soaked corn's going to work and swell and push out and bust this boat to smithereens!"

The Farcas Brothers rolled the empty barrels into the steam-tug. Memphis Gator took time for one more sadistic touch. He yanked the Voodoo gris-gris from the mainmast, pulled open the cabin door wide enough to toss in Marie Laveau's masterpiece, and chuckled as Cormac whined in fear.

"Always hated dogs," he said, and went aboard the tug which cast off and steamed away, back to Slocum's Landing.



DEATH stood less than an hour from McCargo's elbow. Branded in his memory were stories of ships carrying corn in their holds—ships which had sprung leaks or taken heavy seas during a storm, ships whose bellies had swollen until they burst. Already he could hear the corn working, an inhuman stirring and murmuring, like the rustle of dry leaves on a grave. Was it his imagination or were the timbers of the *Minong* already groaning under the strain?

Desperately he fought with the ropes until warm blood bathed numb wrists. His mind formed images; Hulda mated to Memphis Gator; his son at the river bully's mercy; the proud *Minong* sinking down, down, down, never to sail again.

McCargo had forgotten Cormac.

The great Irish Wolfhound, terror-crazed by the smell of the Voodoo gris-gris, hurled his bulk against the locked cabin door in wild lunges to escape the Thing.

One last time he crouched, panting, then sprang forward, smashing his mighty shoulders against the wood, and burst on-to deck.

He trotted to McCargo and whined. He sniffed the ropes that bound his master, and, with fangs that could tear the throat from a bull-moose in one slash, he chewed on knots.

As dusk fell, the *Minong*, with her hold shovelled clean of the deadly corn, ghosted into the creek at Slocum's Landing, and a tight-lipped party went ashore.

"I want them taken alive," said McCargo. "I have reasons."

"I'll deliver mine alive." *Sp-urt!* "But not too healthy." *Sp-lash!*

Memphis Gator and the three Farcas Brothers had celebrated their victory with

a jug of corn whiskey. They never knew what hit them.

The *Minong* sailed for Buffalo with four battered prisoners in her hold and a stack of Slocum Landing cord-wood on her deck. She slipped into a berth alongside the *Eclipse* which Sparhawk commanded while Black Pompey and Red Massauga transferred prisoners and cord-wood to the steamboat.

McCargo, trailed by Cormac, walked uptown, dictated two documents to a pettifogger, and took the lawyer with him when he called on Kreeger at his office.

The shipping magnate looked up from his desk. The winter-moon glow drifted across his face as McCargo presented the legal papers. "I'm a busy man. What is this nonsense?"

"A full confession of your crimes, implicating Memphis Gator and the Farcas Brothers, and your Last Will & Testament which leaves everything to Colonel Newberry."

The glass eye glittered. "Do you think I'm fool enough to sign these?"

"You'd be a fool not to sign them." McCargo's voice was bleak. "This lawyer knows the whole story and the town will have the news in ten minutes. If you sign, I'll give you a chance to escape a lynching mob aboard the *Eclipse*."

For thirty seconds only Kreeger's hoarse breathing broke the silence. Then his goosequill pen sputtered across the documents. "Let's go," he said, and dashed for the gangplank of the *Eclipse*.

As they reached the steamboat, McCargo yanked Kreeger's sleeve and looked at him with eyes that were gray stones. "There's only one catch to this escape: Your regular crew has been relieved by an emergency shift of Memphis Gator and the Farcas Brothers. They're wearing legshackles down in the engine-room and Sparhawk gave them a jug of their favorite corn whiskey, but they're not too drunk to fire the boilers—even if they won't be able to recognize the Slocum Landing cord-wood after they run out of the few sticks of good fuel."

Full knowledge of his doom came to Kreeger, and the power-madness wilted on his face.

"It's better than hanging," said McCargo. "And it suits my idea of justice." He stood on the dock and watched the *Eclipse* steam into Lake Erie, and turned away only when the shock of an explosion rocked the waterfront and flames blood-tinged the afternoon clouds.



AFTER Old Cap Sparhawk finished that particular yarn about Thunder Bay McCargo, he always bit off a jaw-whopping slab of Peerless Plug and fresh-juiced the Steamboat Hotel's potbellied stove in philosophical style.

"Yes, sir, that was McCargo's notion of making the punishment fit the crime. Reckon you might say that Kreeger and his gang was hoisted by their own peetard!"

The Downeasterner would drop his voice to a Niagara roar and solemn-stare the crowd. "Mighty strange how McCargo's Last Will & Testament turned into somebody else's! And even stranger how the Voodoo Charm got the last laugh on that Memphis Mockingbird. Goes to show it don't pay to cackle at the supernatural—specially when it's stronger than a hydrophobia skunk in a damp cave. I'm here to tell you—that Voodoo Gumbo carried the Power!"

The *Prairie Dew's* skipper would heave a mock sigh. "But it must have pretty near broken McCargo's heart." *Sp-urt!* "Having to bust up the *Minong's* quartet again." *Sp-lash!* "Of course he turned right around and . . . but that's another story."

Then the peppery old gent would glare at his listeners. "The rest of you can sit around here all day, gabbing! Me, I'm going to wear out, not rust out!" And he would bustle out the door like a bantam rooster looking for a fighting cock to crow at.

"Sparhawk's my name!" *Sp-urt!* "Who in tarnation are you!" *Sp-lash!*



BLACK ICE



By
JIM KJELGAARD



Coldly, unemotionally, Jerrison sighted at the center of Cole's back and squeezed the trigger.

JERRISON WAS tired of cold, and wind, and desolation, and his partner, and Wobase, their Eskimo dog driver and man of all work, and ice, and everything else that had to do with this everlasting arctic sea. The three days that must elapse until he was out of it,

and heading back to San Francisco with all the money any one man would ever need, seemed an eternity.

Jerrison fingered the single-barrelled shotgun he carried in his gloved hands and smiled mirthlessly to himself. They would be three endless days for him, but they,

or part of them, were the only three days Cole and Wobase had left. Jerrison was very sure of that because he was sure that, before they got to Fort Whip, Wobase and Cole would be dead. Jerrison intended to kill them.

Jerrison glanced irritably at Cole, ahead of him and just behind the sledge, and at Wobase, walking ahead of the five straining dogs. Wobase, he reflected, was completely animal and Cole was not much better. For twelve long weeks they had been out in this frozen hell, working on a bleak island where, as Cole had promised, gold nuggets lay on top of the ground. There had not, however, been as much gold as Cole had thought. Still, packed in seal and musk-ox skin pokes on the sledge, there was more than enough to keep Jerrison in luxury for the rest of his days.

Jerrison snapped, "How far do we have to go today?"

As though he, too, had heard the question or somehow read Jerrison's mind, Wobase swerved a little to the right. He stopped, and the tired dogs dropped in their traces. Wobase started to unpack the sledge and Cole said good-naturedly, "No farther, Jerry. This ends today's trail."

Jerrison said lamely, "I was only asking—guess I'm still a tenderfoot."

"It happens that way," Cole said soberly. "It takes about a year to get used to the ice."

Cole and Wobase lifted the tent from the sledge, and set it up. They weighted one side down with the sledge itself, and placed heavy blocks of snow on the other. Jerrison stood moodily aside as they chopped two parallel trenches for each tent rope, and perforated the intervening wall of ice as a toggle for the ropes. Jerrison tried to conceal his smoldering resentment.



HE had come north because of an argument, and the man who had argued with him had shortly afterwards died with a .38 slug in his heart. Jerrison had had enough money to finance Cole's proposed expedition, with the understanding that any gold they found would be evenly divided. At first it had seemed high adventure, and Jerrison had tried to be genuinely helpful. However, he had only

gotten in the way. Cole and Wobase could set up camp and get a meal in far less time if Jerrison stayed clear.

Jerrison lifted his own personal pack from the sledge and opened it. He brushed aside the tooth brush, wash cloth, and other toilet articles which, to Cole's amusement, he had insisted upon bringing along and reached towards the bottom of the pack. Then, remembering something that should have been there, he went through his toilet articles again. Jerrison's anger flared openly.

Dropping the pack, he strode purposefully to Wobase and twined his right hand in the collar of the Eskimo's caribou-skin coat. Jerrison looked at the Eskimo's eyes, and he thought of a startled cow. He drew back his left fist to strike. Then his left arm was clamped in a grip that Jerrison could not break and he swung to face Cole.

"Stop it!" Cole's voice was sharp.

"That damned heathen stole my razor!" Jerrison snarled. "That isn't the first thing he's pilfered, either! I'll—"

"Stop it now!" Cole snapped. "I'll have no trouble!"

"I'll break his damned—"

Cole slapped repeatedly with the flat of his hand, rocking Jerrison's head back and forth and shaking with his other hand. Jerrison blinked, and stepped back. Cole released him.

"Sorry I had to do that," he said evenly, "but Wobase is my friend and I'll not have him hurt. Tell him you're sorry."

"I—"

"Tell him you're sorry!"

"I'm sorry," Jerrison mumbled.

The Eskimo flashed a toothy smile and Jerrison sullenly retreated. He pawed through his pack to the six packs of gum in the bottom. He broke a pack, stripped the paper from a stick of gum, and chewed it.

Almost at once some of his nervous tension departed. Jerrison did not smoke and he drank only sparingly. He was a gum addict, and he had nursed his supply throughout the trip. Carefully Jerrison replaced the disturbed articles in his pack and walked over to where Cole and Wobase were still arranging the camp.

Now he had utter control of himself

and his anger. Only fools lost their heads, and fools usually got what they deserved. He would not be a fool and he could not afford to kill Cole and Wobase now because his plan was not completed. Also, he needed them for the next two days. Jerrison said sheepishly, "I really am sorry, Cole. I don't know what got into me."

Cole looked up, again friendly. "That's all right, Jerry. You're not the first man to go ice mad."

Jerrison said, "There was no excuse for it."

Wobase had finished making ice toggles for and tethering the dogs, all but one which he kept on a leash and with him. The Eskimo picked up a harpoon and a long ivory bobber, and inspected them critically. Jerrison said, "Wobase, wait."

The Eskimo halted, flashing his toothy grin at Jerrison while the dog crouched beside him. Jerrison walked over to and picked up the single-barrelled shotgun. He took two buckshot shells from his pocket and without removing his gloves he slipped one into the gun's chamber. Jerrison extended the gun.

"Take these," he said, holding out the other shell.

Wobase removed his glove, accepted the proffered gun, fingered it all over, and slipped it under his arm. Jerrison exulted. When he finally came to Fort Whip, with the bodies of Cole and Wobase on the sledge, Wobase's fingerprints must be on the shotgun.

Cole grinned at him. "You're wasting your time."

"How come?"

"Wobase is no civilized Eskimo. He started out with harpoons, and he'll finish with 'em."

Jerrison said, "I'm still ashamed of myself. I'm going to give him that shotgun when we get back to Fort Whip."

Cole shrugged. "He'll probably trade it for something else."

They watched Wobase, with the spear and ivory bobber in one hand and the shotgun in the other, go down the ice. The dog beside him stopped to sniffle, then began to paw at the snow that covered the ice. Wobase dragged him back. With the toe of his sealskin boot the Eskimo prodded in the snow until he found the breathing

hole which the dog had smelled. He thrust the ivory bobber into it, and stood with his spear poised. Then, with an apologetic glance at Jerrison, he laid the shotgun on the ice and held his harpoon with both hands.

Cole said, "I told you so."

Jerrison grinned, "It's a curious thing, in this near-atomic age, to find anybody who'll use the weapons of five thousand years ago when he has a gun in his hand."

Cole said, "Wobase knows what he's doing. I suppose he could poke the nose of that shotgun down the breathing hole and kill the seal he's after, but he'd lose the seal. With the harpoon he'll get him."

"Does he even know how to use a gun?"

"He knows all right, and he uses one when he's hunting caribou. Out on the ice he prefers his own weapons."

Pushed by a seal coming up to breathe, the ivory bobber snapped upwards. Wobase thrust the harpoon with both arms, and sank it deep into the seal. Cole snatched an ice chisel from the sledge and ran to help him while the interested dogs sat up and turned their heads towards the scene. They knew what was taking place, and that they would soon have fresh meat.

Jerrison watched calmly as Cole chopped a hole big enough to drag the seal through. Heaving together on the harpoon shaft, Cole and Wobase lifted the seal out on the ice, but before they attached a line and started to drag it towards camp Wobase carefully picked up Jerrison's shotgun. Jerrison smiled. Everything was working out exactly as he had planned it. The police at Fort Whip had modern crime-detection equipment, and Jerrison was banking heavily on the fingerprints to be found on the gun.

Wobase removed his mittens, handed the shotgun to Jerrison, and cut the seal up. He threw raw chunks to the dogs, and dumped a greasy mass of mixed lean and blubber into the pot which Cole had bubbling over the seal-oil lamp. Jerrison ate, not with relish or satisfaction but because he must eat if he would walk the long distance they had to cover tomorrow. For a little while, unspeaking, the three sat around the cooling pot. Then Cole emptied the water out to prevent the pot's freezing and cracking and the three sought their blankets.



FOR a long while Jerrison lay awake, staring into the blackness of the tent and mentally going over his plans. On their last day, as soon as he was sure that he could make it into Fort Whip alone, he would shoot Cole in the back with buckshot. Then he would shoot Wobase, possibly in the face. At any rate, Wobase must be killed from the front.

Jerrison would then load their bodies on the sledge and continue to Fort Whip. He would tell the police that Wobase had been sullen for days. Wobase sulked, Jerrison would say, because he thought that he was not receiving fair pay. To help placate him, Jerrison gave him the shotgun. Wobase had seemed to be more complaisant after that, but on their last night out he had demanded Cole's rifle. Cole had refused to give it to him. Wobase and Cole had fought, and Wobase had been beaten.

The Eskimo had seemed to accept his defeat. However, without any warning whatever, the next morning he had shot Cole in the back. At once he had tried to re-load the gun so he could shoot Jerrison. In the interval while he was re-loading, Jerrison had run forward and grappled with Wobase. He had wrested the shotgun from him and called upon Wobase to surrender, but he had been forced to shoot.

As he turned it over in his mind, Jerrison could detect no flaws in the plan. Wobase's fingerprints would be on the gun, and Jerrison's word should carry some weight. Maybe it would be a good idea to take his right mitten off when he shot, so that some of his own prints would be on the stock too—he intended to admit that he killed Wobase in self-defense.

Jerrison finally slept, and awoke to the sounds of Cole and Wobase making ready for another day's march. For a moment Jerrison lay drowsily in his blankets, reluctant to get up and face another day because he knew what it would bring. There would be more greasy seal meat for breakfast. The tent would be pulled down and loaded, and they would start over the ice again. However, it was pleasant to think that tonight would be his last in an ice camp. Tomorrow night he would sleep snugly at Fort Whip.

Cole called companionably, "You going to sleep all day, Jerry?"

Jerrison crawled out and blinked in the glare of a sun that was just rising over the ice pack. He shivered, for the wind that had arisen in the short arctic night was cold. Sourly he glanced at Cole and Wobase, and then he tried to conceal his sourness. He couldn't have them suspicious. Jerrison grinned.

In one way he was doing both Cole and Wobase a great favor. Daylight had lasted twenty-four hours when they went out on the pack, but now the sun had started sinking and there was a short night that became increasingly longer. Soon the night would be twenty-four hours long, and Cole had announced that he intended to stay in the arctic. He would, he said, open a big trading post with his share of gold and Wobase would work for him. Anybody who intended to stay in this godforsaken place was better off dead.

"What's so funny, Jerry?" Cole asked.

"Oh," Jerrison stretched and made an effort to sound pleasant, "I just feel good."

"Getting near Frisco, eh?"

"Maybe that's it," Jerrison admitted.

Cole said, "Tomorrow will put us into Fort Whip."

"That's all right with me!" Jerrison said fervently.

Jerrison ate, and he watched Cole and Wobase strike the tent and load the sledge. Wobase harnessed the dogs, and made ready to lead off. The shotgun in his extended hand, Jerrison walked up to the Eskimo. "Here. Take it."

Wobase accepted the shotgun, flashed his buck-toothed smile, and Jerrison felt little prickles of irritation rise at the base of his neck. There was something about the Eskimo's toothy acceptance of everything that annoyed him greatly.

Cole smiled. "Still determined to convert the heathen, eh?"

Jerrison said, a little self-consciously, "It isn't so much that, Cole. It's just that it does something to me to see anybody poking around with spears and knives and—oh, I can't explain it."

Cole nodded, and followed after the moving sledge. He said over his shoulder, "The ice is just right today, Jerry. We should make a long hop."



JERRISON sat wearily down on the sledge and watched his two companions make camp.

He was very tired, and disinclined to move, and the fact that the others seemed almost as fresh as when they had started exasperated him. Jerrison's shotgun always near him, Wobase began to chop ice toggles for the tent ropes. His rifle under his arm, Cole strode away.

Moodily, Jerrison watched him go. Whenever they were on unbroken ice, Wobase did the hunting. When there were leads, and seals to bask beside them, Cole hunted with his rifle. Cole disappeared among some hummocks and Jerrison rose.

His nerves were tense, frayed almost to the breaking point, but he dared not let go. A stick of gum would relieve his tension, and make another night on the ice bearable. Jerrison took up his pack, prodded through it to the bottom, and knew mighty rage.

Last night there had been five full packs of gum and four loose sticks. Now all of it was gone. Jerrison looked at the Eskimo, the searing fury he felt reflected in his eyes. He rose slowly, and walked towards the uncertainly-grinning Wobase. Jerrison's fist shot out.

Just in time, he stopped the blow. He didn't know how to make a camp himself, and he wouldn't have the least idea of how properly to go about breaking this one and re-packing the sledge. The police at Fort Whip would know at a glance whether it had been packed by an expert or an amateur. Besides, if he hit Wobase now he would be certain to provoke an argument with Cole. He could wait one more day. A fit of anger might spoil his plans.

Twenty minutes later, towing a seal he had shot, Cole returned to camp. Jerrison watched narrowly, but Wobase said nothing beyond the usual amenities. He started cutting up the seal, and Cole walked over to sit beside Jerrison.

"Had to hunt for that one," he said. "Seals aren't too plentiful around here."

Jerrison said, with forced affability, "It's a good thing you and Wobase know how to hunt. I'd starve in this place."

Cole grinned, and look at the shotgun. "Didn't he want it?"

"He gave it back," Jerrison said. "But

he can have it when we get to Fort Whip. How far are we from it anyhow, Cole?"

"We'll be in by the middle of tomorrow afternoon."

Jerrison said, "I still wonder how the dickens you were able to steer us straight in all this."

"Compass," Cole said, matter-of-factly. "We won't even need that from here in. The dogs will take us straight to the fort."

"I see."

Jerrison sat back, a little more relaxed now and feeling easier. Tomorrow was the day. He needn't fear anything, or hesitate, because his whole plan was simplified. Everything had played squarely into his hands. After he shot Wobase and Cole he had only to follow the dogs. It would be easy. They ate, sought their blankets and Jerrison turned out with Cole and Wobase. Then, when they started on the trail, Jerrison looked studiously at Cole's back.

He could shoot any time, and it might as well be now. Jerrison moved up far enough to cut the twenty yards that had separated himself and Cole to fifteen. Everything was perfectly clear and he went about it with complete calm. As soon as he shot Cole, Wobase would undoubtedly stop. Then Jerrison could run up and shoot him at close range. He wasn't sure whether or not later examination would prove that Wobase had been killed at close range, but Jerrison would leave nothing to chance. His tale of a hand-to-hand scuffle with the Eskimo must be borne out.

Jerrison stripped his right mitten off, used the heavy mitten to muffle the click, as he cocked the gun, and raised it. Coldly, unemotionally, he sighted at the center of Cole's back and squeezed the trigger.

There was a blinding roar, and a flash of flame as the gun ripped apart. The hammer, blasted loose, came back to strike Jerrison squarely between the eyes. Parts of the bursting gun plowed through his hands, and into his chest. As Jerrison sank to his knees, his last impression was that the ice had become very, very black.

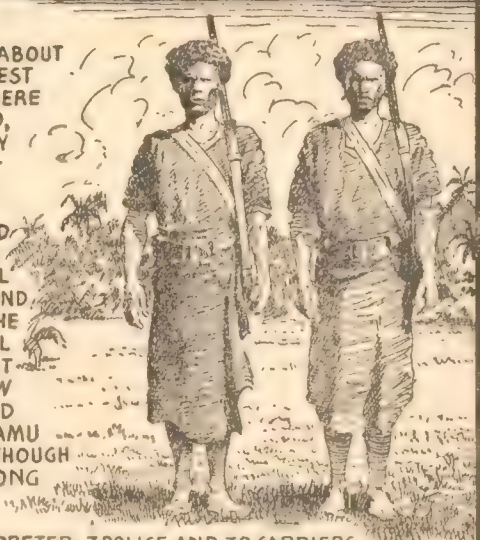
And he never knew that Wobase, fearing Jerrison, had considered the barrel of the shotgun a perfect hiding place for chewed, stolen gum which later had frozen to rock hardness.

Accent on-

THERE HAVE BEEN NO END OF STORIES WRITTEN ABOUT THE ADVENTURES OF THE F.B.I., THE NORTHWEST MOUNTED POLICE AND SCOTLAND YARD. YET THERE IS ANOTHER POLICE FORCE, SELDOM MENTIONED, WHOSE MEMBERS LIVE ENOUGH ADVENTURE, DAY BY DAY, TO FILL AN ORDINARY MAN'S LIFETIME -- *THE NATIVE POLICE OF THE ISLAND OF PAPUA.*

THESE MEN ARE ONE STEP FROM SAVAGERY AND ARE DESCENDANTS OF SAVAGES, BUT THEY ARE A PROUD BODY OF MEN, HIGHLY TRAINED AND LOYAL TO THE CORE. LED BY WHITE PATROL OFFICERS, AND PITIFULLY FEW IN NUMBER, THEY ACCOMPLISH THE SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE -- FOR EXAMPLE, PATROL OFFICER J. G. HIDES RECEIVED ORDERS TO ARREST AN *UNKNOWN* NUMBER OF NATIVES OF AN *UNKNOWN* TRIBE IN *UNKNOWN* COUNTRY! THE NATIVES HAD RAIDED A MINER'S CAMP FAR UP THE LAKEKAMU RIVER AND HAD TO BE TAUGHT A LESSON, ALTHOUGH CHANCES WERE, THEY HAD NO IDEA OF WRONG DOING -- AND THIS PROVED TO BE THE CASE.

HIDES LEFT KEREMA WITH 1 SERGEANT, 1 INTERPRETER, 7 POLICE AND 30 CARRIERS. THEY REACHED THE MINER'S CAMP WHERE THEY LEARNED THE DETAILS OF THE RAID, THEN HEADED NORTH INTO HUNDREDS OF SQUARE MILES OF UNKNOWN TERRITORY ON THE TRAIL OF THE RAIDERS. IN THE COUNTRY DRAINED BY THE KIAPOU RIVER THEY BEGAN TO RUN ACROSS THE EVIDENCE -- PROSPECTING DISHES, SHOVELS ETC., BUT THE NATIVES, WHO PROVED TO BE KIAPOU PYGMIES, FLED THEIR VILLAGES AHEAD OF THE PATROL.

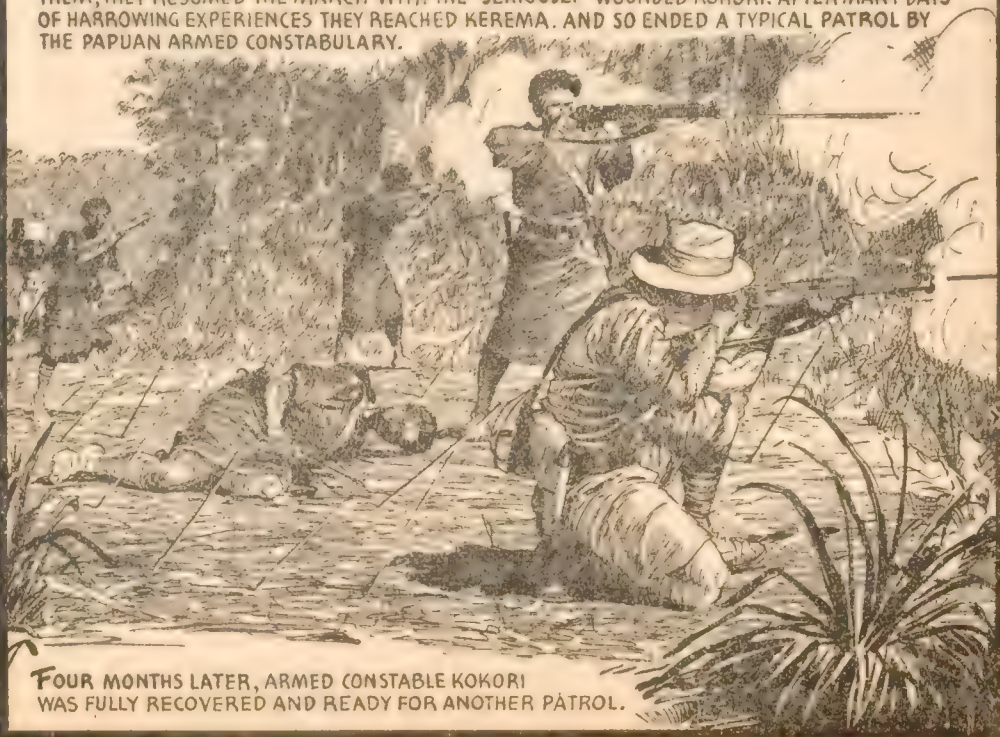


ADVENTURE!

AT LAST HIDES ESTABLISHED CONTACT WITH THE LITTLE BROWN MEN AND AFTER MUCH TIME AND INFINITE PATIENCE, INDUCED THEM TO APPROACH. HE THEN PRODUCED THE STOLEN MATERIAL. FIVE PYGMIES CLAIMED OWNERSHIP AND WERE ARRESTED ON THE SPOT. THERE FOLLOWED A TERRIFIC STRUGGLE BETWEEN POLICE, CARRIERS AND THE LITTLE MEN -- IT TOOK FOUR MEN TO SUBDUCE ONE PYGMY.



A FEW DAYS LATER, SURROUNDED BY THE HOSTILE TRIBE, THEY MADE A DASH FOR THE COAST WITH THEIR PRISONERS-- A HUNDRED MILES BY TRAIL AND A MOUNTAIN RANGE AHEAD. A BODY OF BOWMEN FOLLOWED AND ON THE SECOND DAY SUDDENLY ATTACKED FROM AMBUSH. A.C. KOKORI FELL, BADLY WOUNDED BY ARROWS. AFTER A DESPERATE SKIRMISH, THE PYGMIES WERE DRIVEN OFF BY RIFLE FIRE. IN THE EXCITEMENT THE PRISONERS GOT AWAY, AND KNOWING IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO RECAPTURE THEM, THEY RESUMED THE MARCH WITH THE SERIOUSLY WOUNDED KOKORI. AFTER MANY DAYS OF HARROWING EXPERIENCES THEY REACHED KEREMA. AND SO ENDED A TYPICAL PATROL BY THE PAPUAN ARMED CONSTABULARY.



FOUR MONTHS LATER, ARMED CONSTABLE KOKORI WAS FULLY RECOVERED AND READY FOR ANOTHER PATROL.

APPOINTMENT



In the lifeboat the crew alternately leaned and pulled on the oars to keep her from turning over.

WHEN he thought of it afterwards it gave Ashley an odd sensation—almost of fear—in the pit of his stomach. He had just finished writing the word *death* in his current manuscript when the phone rang to inform him of a demise that was far from fictitious.

"Mr. Ashley?"

"Speaking."

"Head Office here, Ashley. Hoggarth. I'm sorry to have to tell you—Captain McKinley's dead."

"What!"

"Yes. Last night—at midnight."

"But we only got in yesterday! . . . For Pete's sake!"

"That's right. It seems . . ."

Ashley listened incredulously. Rosalyn

WITH FEAR

By
THOMAS GILCHRIST



ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES GEER

Ashley, sitting in a corner of the chesterfield, continued her needlework on a lampshade. She looked up when she heard the receiver drop back in the cradle. Her husband was running his fingers through his hair and looking at her.

"Captain McKinley's dead," he told her. Her lips parted but she did not speak. He looked away into the fire. "Crazy, isn't it?" he said. "Less than twenty-four hours ago he was berthing his ship. He was being acclaimed, the newspapers were giving him the front page. Less than twenty-four hours ago—and he belongs in the past already. Death can be frighteningly swift!"

"What happened?" Rosalyn asked.

"Nothing! That's the strangest part of it. Stomach trouble, Hoggarth says. Of course, everyone knew McKinley had stomach trouble for years, but—good heavens!—it hasn't bothered him for a long time now. I just can't believe it. In fact," he added slowly, "I don't believe it."

She glanced at him curiously. Ashley lit a cigarette and the match pinked as it fell into the chrome ashtray on his desk.

"He's being cremated tomorrow," he said. "I have to take his ashes out with me and scatter them in the Strait."

"You're taking command, then?"

He nodded. "Yes. They want me to go down and check the ship's papers today—and pack his personal effects. I'll leave after lunch."

He returned to his manuscript. He looked with interest at the title page and pushed the sheets over to one side. Then he leaned an elbow on his desk and cupped his chin in his hand. Rosalyn Ashley continued her embroidery. She glanced up occasionally but did not speak. She was used to and was content with the long silences of a sailor-author, and she knew what McKinley had meant to him.



THE green blotter on Ashley's desk became a sound screen on which he saw a riot of pictures: a small coaster pounding to pieces on Mermaid Rock; Three Hummocks Island and white seas thundering up the cliffs in the night, too close—far too close; a spare figure of a man lying in his bunk, a stony look in his

eyes; the same man, spruced up and jaunty, taking over from the officer-of-the-watch when making port.

"All right, sir! You can leave her to me now . . . starboard a bit, quartermaster!" Clip, clip, clip! You always knew what McKinley was saying, and you also knew that it was all there was to be said . . . Four gold bands on the shoulder of his bridge coat; thick, iron-gray hair sticking out from under his braided cap; broad forehead, face narrowing down to a pointed chin; an aggressive nose, hollow cheeks, lined; thick black eyebrows streaked with white; deepset gray eyes, a trifle bloodshot, a faintly sardonic mouth; binoculars hanging from a strap about his neck, bony hands clasped behind him.

"Fifteen degrees, sir? Make it six!" Snap, snap! That was the bow bearing of Fawkner Beacon. They always "made it six," but not before McKinley said so.

The picture of the wreck returned and Ashley pushed it aside for the time being and tried to begin at the beginning.

They had shaken their heads when he was first appointed to the *Nirvana*; had told him how sorry they were. Going with McKinley? Godalmighty, man! You won't last a month! Self-sufficient son-of-a-gun if ever there was one. That's McKinley . . . Nobody else knows anything . . . Been on his mail packet too long . . . Well, good luck to you, anyway . . .

So when Ashley joined the ship it was with a certain amount of trepidation. He knocked discreetly on the door of the captain's cabin, which was on the bridge, next to the chart room, and the door jerked open before he'd dropped his hand.

"Yes?"

It wasn't so much a question as a challenge. The word was whipped out. Captain McKinley was in his blue trousers, suspenders hanging, and a collarless white shirt, evidently just changing into uniform. Ashley handed him his letter of appointment.

"My name is Ashley, sir. I've been instructed to join as chief officer."

Captain McKinley threw the letter on his desk without taking his eyes from his new executive.

"I've seen your record, Mr. Ashley," he said. "You have experience and a

Master's certificate so I shouldn't have to tell you what to do. Carry on, and—I hope you'll be very happy here."

Ashley went down to his room scratching the side of his nose. For a man of McKinley's reputation, that was a very nice thing to say. "I hope you'll be very happy here." He recalled a story they'd told him of a nervous young third officer joining and reporting to McKinley.

"You've heard of me?" McKinley had snapped.

"Yes, sir!"

"I'm a bastard!"

"Yes, sir—I mean—"

"Carry on!"

Ashley smiled to himself. He was satisfied that McKinley had a sense of humor, anyway; and he was very happy with McKinley.

He learned in time about his wife and daughter. McKinley never spoke of them as one sometimes does on long, deep sea passages when the inner pressure becomes too great. The *Nirvana*, with mails and some 500 passengers, ran at 20 knots across the Bass Strait, an overnight run, and was home three days out of seven. It was practically a shore berth and family-hunger didn't build up. But Ashley heard from here and there of Mrs. McKinley and Hester and he saw their photos on the captain's desk. They might have been sisters.

Throughout the years McKinley had built a modest block of apartments, in one of which they lived. He was, then, a prudent family man. Later, Ashley wondered if his prudence wasn't actually due to his nervous stomach. It was well-known that McKinley was preparing, and was nearly ready, for his retirement.

Ashley stubbed his cigarette and lit another. The picture of the little coaster pounding on Mermaid Rock intruded again and he resolutely pushed it aside.

He'd been six months aboard before McKinley mentioned his stomach, and then it was only in passing. He had himself suffered an indisposition that had put him ashore for a trip, and when he returned he attempted to describe it.

"It's nothing," McKinley had said. "I've been nursing my stomach for fifteen years. No spleen left." He smiled briefly. "Anatomically, I mean."

It was mentioned again when they had cleared the Tamar once. The Tamar in daylight, the narrow, tortuous, fast-running Tamar with its shoals and mud, was bad enough. In the dark, with just an odd beacon along its course of 34 twisted miles and sometimes with rain to shut out even the starlight, it was several hours of sheer nightmare to a mail packet skipper. When they had cleared and McKinley had gone to his cabin, Ashley went in to see him about something and found him sitting in a cloud of smoke, drawing deeply on a hand-rolled cigarette. He had never seen him smoking and understood that the doctor had ordered him off tobacco.

McKinley looked up.

"Sometimes," he said, "when I clear that bloody river my stomach is upside-down." On the bridge you'd never have known it.

Ashley remembered going up the Yarra when a big tanker came down with more speed than it had any right to. In fact, there should have been no meeting in the river at all. The tanker's captain had mistaken the signals. The *Nirvana* was crowded to the bank and then when the other had thrashed past, her bow fell into the trough the tanker's displacement had made. It was a bad minute that could have spelled disaster. She was charging over to the ramparts and was near a chain ferry; and that chain made it impossible to use the anchors. But there was no uncertainty on the bridge. No alarm, even.

"Full ahead port engine! Stop starboard! 'Midships helm!" Crack, crack, crack! "Stop port! Half-astern starboard!"

The *Nirvana* twisted, heeled, and her quarter seemed to rise on the river bank. And when it seemed that nothing could save her propellers from fouling, she gathered way under the whip of McKinley's orders. He explained to Ashley afterwards the knack of building a cushion of water between the ship and the bank. While he smoked another of his strong cigarettes.

Yes, they might have called him twin brother to a death adder, and it may have been professional jealousy. Or maybe he just expected too much of others. Maybe he had a right to expect more than they

habitually gave. He gave plenty of himself in explaining to Ashley the vagaries of his ship and the peculiar hazards of that particular trade. He had commanded the *Nirvana* for 20 years.



THEN came—the night before last. The radio officer's face was white when he entered the chart room and handed Ashley the message.

"She sounds pretty close," the radio man said.

"She is," Ashley told him when he had read the message. He knocked and entered the captain's bedroom through the communicating door. Captain McKinley was in his bunk, his reading light on and a magazine in his hands. In his pajamas he looked, to Ashley, more spare than ever. His neck was thin and corded and oddly white below the collar line.

"An S.O.S., sir," Ashley said, holding out the yellow form.

Capt. McKinley made no move to take it. His hands remained on the magazine that he had lowered to his knees.

"Read it," he said.

Ashley cleared his throat. "*Aground on Mermaid Rock,*" he read. "*Am breaking up fast in heavy westerly seas. Lifeboat gone. Master, Wonnon.*"

He did not once look up from the radio gram. He became conscious of the deck heaving under his feet. He found himself holding his breath; was aware, somehow, of an odd state of suspension. McKinley's face swam into his consciousness and he read upon it—incredibly—Fear! . . . Fear! . . . He sucked in his breath soundlessly. He must be wrong. He hoped he was wrong, yet he was afraid to meet the expression he knew he'd find. Good God! He moistened his lips.

"That's all, sir," he said, and looked up at last.

McKinley's eyes were stony, his whole body rigid. He didn't move a finger. He didn't speak. It was painful to Ashley. The silence only lasted moments, but it was an eternity to him. He broke it.

"She's the little cattle boat, of course—the *Wonnon*. About ten in her crew, I imagine."

Captain McKinley turned his head towards him.

"How far are we off?" he asked, strangely quiet.

"Forty miles, sir—two hours."

"Are you suggesting full speed against this weather?" McKinley queried, his mouth tight. There was a half-gale blowing outside, but it was abaft the beam on the present course.

"There's nothing else about, sir—according to Sparks."

"Very well. Set the course for Mermaid Rock. See to the floodlights. I'll be out in a few minutes."

Despite the cold, Ashley found himself perspiring when he stepped back into the chart room and bent over the chart. He didn't know what it was unless it was the fear of fear itself. It had been so unexpected. He eased his cap from his brow before he picked up the dividers and laid the parallel rules on Mermaid Rock. He sniffed once and caught the aroma of strong tobacco. The skipper was having one of his rare smokes. He couldn't blame him.

He went through to the darkened wheelhouse where only the face of the helmsman showed palely in the soft light from the binnacle.

"Port easy quartermaster!" he ordered. "Bring her to two-six-zero! Easy!"

"Two-six-zero easy, sir!"

He went out on the bridge and blew his whistle for the watch-on-deck. He stepped up to the weatherboard and his cap left his head and his hair whipped frantically in the wind. The gale shrieked defiantly in his ears and chilled his bones. He looked at the ragged clouds racing overhead, the complacent moon riding at high speed. And as the ship came round, adding her twenty knots to the velocity of the gale, the spindrift hissed and flew whitely past the colored sidelights, and lashed the bridge. He turned up the collar of his bridge coat, but the water, ice-cold, was already running down his neck. He wiped his face and licked the brine from his lips and moved into the cab for such lee as he could find. The deck lifted, heeled, swung back violently, and he grabbed a stanchion to keep his feet. It was wet under his hands. The *Nirvana* plunged ahead with a quick, excited corkscrew motion.

When Captain McKinley appeared on

the bridge, a shadow in oilskins that gleamed when the moon came through, Ashley had to shout against the wind.

"She's on her course, sir! Two-six-zero!"

"All right." McKinley moved into the cab. "Inform the engine room, Mr. Ashley. Then see that the passengers are off the decks. Explain that it's the weather—only. We don't want any excitement."

Ashley grinned queerly in the dark. "We don't want any excitement!" "No, no! There was a coaster being ground to pieces on Mermaid Rock and maybe a dozen men fighting desperately and almost hopelessly to live; and a mail packet plunging through a gale to the rescue—to an almost impossible rescue—but for heaven's sake don't let there be any excitement! Ashley was nearly persuaded that he hadn't, after all, looked Fear in the face—Fear lying in a bunk with a magazine on its knees. McKinley was moving out on the bridge again, as jaunty as ever.

The standby reported in answer to his whistle, and Ashley gave his orders.



IT WAS eleven o'clock when they saw the pyrotechnics shoot into the wracked heavens. They traveled redly with long tails like comets and burst into a million stars. Evidently the *Wonnon* had seen their lights. Ashley stepped into the wheelhouse and took a speaking tube from its hook.

"Searchlight!" he called.

Captain McKinley was in the wheelhouse, too. "Engines stand by!" he ordered.

The third officer was by the engine room telegraph, only his face and hands faintly visible in the softly illuminated dial. He swung the handle and an urgent whirr came back and the finger of the dial moved importantly.

"Stand by it is, sir!"

From the flying bridge a powerful beam shot over the wastes of ocean and picked out the rock. Outside now, McKinley and Ashley, feet spread to hold against the heaving deck, their hands extended over the ends of their binoculars to protect the lenses from flying spray, studied the *Wonnon* carefully. Only parts of her showed like dark blotches each time the

clutching seas receded from the attack. The rock itself was nearly awash. And behind the rock, although they could not see them yet, lay the cliffs and crags of Three Hummocks Island. They were only a few cable-lengths from Mermaid Rock. Ashley lowered his binoculars and looked about him. The decks were clearly visible in the reflection from the searchlight. The second officer's flashlight winked a few times on the boat deck where he was standing by with his volunteer crew. On the bridge the line-throwing rocket candle was rigged and the quartermasters stood by, ready. There were veritably miles of manila rope laid between boats and bridge as per Captain McKinley's instructions. The steam was on the winches.

"Half-speed, sir! . . . Starboard two points!"

Ashley transmitted the orders from McKinley to the wheelhouse, checked their execution. McKinley was alongside him and with the change of course the wheelhouse made a small lee.

"It's just as I thought," McKinley said, snapping his words. "Can't handle a life-boat independently in that sea. Impossible!"

Ashley nodded silently. The port bow bearing of the rock, the finger of the searchlight following it, was widening rapidly now as they came closer to. The seas were flinging themselves between, the wind whipping them as they rose; great, white cat's-paws reaching in towards the rock. He knew that oarsmen would have scarcely a chance. They'd be flung upon Mermaid Rock with the *Wonnon*. He knew, also, that neither law nor ethics required Captain McKinley to risk his ship and passengers on a surging lee shore, in these or any other circumstances. Counting in his crew, it was a gamble of some 600 to 10. It was his chance to pull out. His fear—or fears, if there was any distinction—was justified. He had done all that could be expected. Ashley cleared his throat and said, "Yes, sir. It's bad, all right."

"So," he heard McKinley say, "I'm going in. I'll pass as close to wind'ard as I dare. You will. . ." Crack, crack, crack! He listened to McKinley's snapped orders with a growing sense of amazement and a queer tingling in his blood.

"And tell the second officer I want to see him. He will take the boat . . . I want you to see to the lines personally . . . signal these instructions to the *Wonnon* . . ."

The signal made and all hands at stations, Ashley watched the *Nirvana* plunge towards the cliffs of Three Hummocks Island. They stood stark, ragged and immense, their feet—their knees—lashed by heavy seas, the foam white in the glare of the floodlights. They swung rapidly to starboard as the ship came round on port helm, the wind eased as it came astern and screeched in renewed fury as it came on the port side.

A part of Ashley's mind dwelt, incongruously, upon Blundell, the second officer. Why was he wanted particularly in the boat when usually the chief officer would have taken the more dangerous job? Was it any reflection upon himself? He was a very bulky man, Blundell; maybe it was a question of sheer weight against a steering oar—and it would need weight. Blundell was an embittered man, too. He had once lost a command and had received an official censure from which he had never recovered . . .

Ashley became aware of a commotion behind him. Somebody was yelling for the captain. He turned and grabbed a wild figure in a dressing gown and he saw, with his face six inches from the other's, that it was Handel, one of the company's directors; and he was in an aura of whiskey fumes. He lashed out and slipped from Ashley's grasp and staggered to the wheelhouse. Chattering, his words shot out like bullets from a machine gun, spitting against the wind.

"Captain! What on earth's the matter? Are you mad? What are you trying to do? I order you out of this at once!"

"Port again—hard over!" McKinley cracked. "Full ahead starboard engines!" The telegraph whirled, the ship heeled to starboard and McKinley never took his eyes off Mermaid Rock. "Get off my bridge!" he snapped. "Ease your helm now!"

Handel had fallen as the deck lurched and he scrambled to his feet. "I'll have you arrested for this! You're trying to lose the ship! Barratry, by God!"

Ashley had him by the collar of his dressing gown. A seaman came to his

assistance and they dragged him out to the bridge ladder.

"The underwriters will have something to say about this, by God!"

"Meantime, they are nicely tucked in bed—where you should be," Ashley informed him, yelling above the wind. He pushed him down the ladder.

"Stand by your rocket lines!"

"All ready, sir!"

Ashley's blood was in his throat. The moment had come. He stood by with the striker in his hand and adjusted the elevation and angle of the rocket candle to the changing bearing of the wreck. He found himself not breathing as the *Nirvana* screwed around in the very mouth of the ditch—for it was no more—that separated the rock from the island. She staggered once and appeared to hesitate; recovered and held her northerly course. The wind yelled and the seas hurled across from the port side, but to starboard a very good lee was made. Of course, she couldn't be held there. . . . Couldn't she?

Without headway she would be blown downwind, she would be carried by those giant cat's-paws to join the *Wonnon* on Mermaid Rock.

The stricken ship was close now, coming rapidly abeam. The fore part of the little coaster was all that was left of her. Figures could be seen clinging to the rails and to each other, picked out clearly by the searchlight. Abeam she came . . .

"Stop her, sir! Rocket away!"

Ashley drew the striker. Flame hissed, shot imperatively from the rocket's tail. There was the acrid smell of burning powder. The jet drove against the deck for perhaps three seconds. Then the rocket left the cradle and whined downwind, breaking into the beam of light over the *Wonnon*. It carried with it a light line.

And from there on it was a succession of cracking orders and urgent execution. Oil spat overboard and spread rapidly towards the wreck. Number one starboard boat, under the second officer, dropped from the davits, unhooked smartly as the seas lifted her back to deck level, and fell away from the side. Lines swept from the stern and the slack was taken up by Ashley's crew on the bridge. Another line from the lifeboat was being handled on the wreck. In the boat the crew alternately

leaned and pulled on the oars to keep her from turning over.

"I shall drift a lifeboat down, sir!" McKinley had said, jauntily.

So, also was the *Nirvana* drifting downwind. Ashley watched the wreck coming dangerously nearer. No man could hold his ship in this position. It was preposterous. No man except McKinley, perhaps. As the tossing lifeboat approached the wreck, Ashley saw her swing abaft the beam and he eased the lines some more from the winches. The deck lifted, the *Nirvana* staggered again and Ashley knew that McKinley, with rudder and twin screws bucking and kicking "as requisite" (he would have put it) was grabbing and clawing the wind and screwing his 20-year-old command about in her own length. He was holding her in place as a jockey holds his spirited filly at the starting post. And close astern—far too close astern—Three Hummocks Island loomed. Ashley could hear the seas thundering against the cliffs.

Incredibly, the operation was completed in a matter of minutes. Winches hauled back the lifeboat and when the last man had scrambled on board, the *Nirvana* plunged ahead without consideration for the boat. It was flung against the ship's side and reduced to matchwood.



ASHLEY raised his eyes from his blotter. The ashtray on his desk was full and he emptied it into the wastepaper basket. He lit another cigarette. The lines of his face hardened.

They were in the officer's lounge the day following the rescue—incredible! only yesterday!—having morning coffee. There were, besides himself, the second officer, the purser and his assistant, the chief and second engineers. They smoked and they drank coffee and said very little. They were half-way up the smooth waters of the bay.

Ashley had already seen Handel, the director. The latter had requested his presence in his suite. He had failed to gain an audience with Captain McKinley. He had produced a bottle and attempted to explain himself: Failed to appreciate the situation, you know. Only natural. Not a seaman, of course. Different point of

view. Had to think of the shareholders and so forth. Ashley, feeling slightly sick, had assured him that no one would hear of it. The ratings on the bridge didn't know him.

In the lounge the assistant purser, who was new to the ship, put down his cup and said, "I think the skipper performed a miracle last night. Certainly a remarkable piece of seamanship. What guts!"

Ashley smiled. He thought that if McKinley heard that he would point out, with his grim humor, that anatomically he *had* no guts.

The chief engineer, Mr. Cram, lifted his sharp chin, regarded the speaker with his little brown eyes and asked, "What's remarkable about it? He was only doing his job, wasn't he? I've got to do mine."

Ashley stopped smiling. The others looked at Mr. Cram. They hadn't got to know him very well. They saw him as quite a nice well-preserved old chap behind a carefully-tended white mustache, and they were at least tolerant of his assertion that he could talk on any subject. Ashley substituted "would" for "could" and knew that he was a pedant and a bore whose only claim to success lay in some thirty-five years of subjugation to the promise of a tiny pension; who had never faced a hazard.

Ashley looked up. In reply to something the others had offered, Mr. Cram was saying, "But the man's *got* no nerves! When you have no nerves it doesn't need courage to do a thing. So I say he only did his job, and in the most unimaginative way, at that. The very fact that he walked into it as he did proves that. What if my engines had broken down!" He poised his cup an inch from his small prim mouth and looked down his nose. "'Fools rush in,' you know, 'where angels fear to tread.'" And he delivered this as though he were shedding a profound and original truth from the lamp of his own great wisdom. The second officer got up and left.

Two hours later they were berthed.

The news had gone in by radio. Reporters swarmed aboard. Bulbs flashed from the cameras of press photographers. They even took a picture of the ship's cat. This was a story! Another great epic of the sea! No penny-a-line crap, this, but

front page stuff! The directors were down and the port officials and such of the office staff as could get away. The directors were met by their colleague, Mr. Handel.

Then, while the chief steward muttered and drove his cooks and waiters, a luncheon was spread in the saloon and corks popped and toasts were drunk and the directors were interviewed and it was all very good for the Line and everyone had a wonderful time. And in the midst of it all, Captain McKinley had slipped ashore.



AT HIS desk, Ashley coughed and got up. He looked over at Rosalyn, who was turning her lampshade, inspecting the completed embroidery.

"Rozzie," he said. "I don't believe I'll have any lunch today, after all. I want to go down and get this job over."

"A cup of coffee, then?" she asked, smiling.

He went up the gangway and felt as if he were entering a morgue. There was a new note, a subtle change, in the old watchman's greeting and in that of the several crew members he met on his way to the bridge. They couldn't know yet, of course, but they would suspect that he was the new master and they would adjust their conduct, and even their opinions, accordingly. They would be careful of them until they saw what he was made of. The ship was silent only because it was the lunch hour and the stevedores had gone to their meals. The work was proceeding as usual and tomorrow she would leave on schedule with her mail and another five hundred passengers. Her life would go on without interruption, even though McKinley—"The King is dead, Long live the King."

Ashley opened the door of the captain's cabin with his passkey. On the brass-shod step he hesitated momentarily, then slowly closed the door behind him. It was cold and he did not remove his topcoat. He looked around at the oak-paneled day room, at the red plush settee, the armchair, the small tea table and the smoker's stand; at the cabinet in the corner with its thin brass rail and the glitter of crystal on top. His eyes roved past the old roll-top desk, through the doorway to the

night room, to the clean bunk and its green curtains, and for an instant he saw McKinley there with his magazine on his knees; with his thin corded neck and his eyes like agates.

The quarters seemed curiously empty and at first he couldn't see why. It was not a subtle, but a distinct and material difference that he sensed; and then he drew in his breath and held it for moments. He went over to the desk and sat down. He pushed up the roll top.

The ship's papers were neatly arranged at the back: the register, the deratization certificate, the articles, the official log book. Ashley opened a notebook that was beside them and found all the *Nirvana's* vital statistics carefully tabulated in McKinley's round handwriting. To the right was a letter file, carbon copies of his official mail. Ashley glanced at the top sheet and pulled the file across.

The first letter was addressed to the head office and was a commendation of the second officer's seamanship and bravery. It expressed the hope that his conduct would re-establish Mr. Blundell in the higher offices of his profession. Ashley turned the page and found that the second letter concerned himself. It was a similar commendation and a strong recommendation for command.

He closed the roll top and got up and his eyes went again to that corner beside the cabinet. They rested there for a long time, meditating, and they became a little hot. At last he turned away. There was nothing left for him to do now, except report to the office.

When he reached home, he said to his wife, "Roz, let's have a drink," and she brought a tray with decanter and glasses and put it on the occasional table beside his desk. He drew up a chair for her.

She smiled. "You look as if you'd seen a ghost!"

"I have," he said, pouring the drinks.

"McKinley, of course?"

He nodded. He said, "You can't imagine what I found when I went aboard today. When I looked around the day room I couldn't think at first what was wrong with it. There was something—sort of off-key, you know. And then I saw in the corner a sea-chest and I looked around again and realized that, of course,

the room had already been stripped of his personal things. The photo of Mrs. McKinley and Hester had gone. There had been a picture of the barque, *Mount Stuart*, on the wall, the ship he'd served his apprenticeship in. It was gone, too; and some volumes of Emerson that were always handy by his chair. There wasn't even a magazine left. There was nothing of McKinley left in the room—except his sea-chest, *freshly labeled and ready to go ashore!*... You know, it was as if his body were in that chest."

Ashley paused. He lit two cigarettes and handed one to his wife. She pushed a lock of auburn hair back from her eyes and her lips parted incredulously. "You're not suggesting that Captain McKinley's ghost—" She stopped. He shook his head and straightened in his chair and leaned an elbow on his desk.

"No, Rozzie, no. But don't you see? McKinley knew yesterday that he would die when he got home. In fact," he said, his forehead corrugated thoughtfully, "he knew the night before that—when I gave him that message—that S.O.S. I guess he knew—he knew that I was reading his death warrant!"

They were silent for a little while and then Ashley nodded as if in agreement with some inner thought.

"Can't you see it now, Roz? It was something much bigger than a trifling fear

for his ship. He knew that he could do the job—but he also knew the cost. From that moment he counted his hours and he directed them towards a clean and orderly departure. Good God! The awful, the tender, the brave acceptance of it all! The relinquishing acceptance of that last call—that dreadful last appointment—that he needn't in all conscience have kept. Do you know, I believe, had it been physically possible, he would have stepped at last—yes, and jauntily, too—into his own coffin." Ashley stubbed his cigarette. "No. Actually his stomach was no more than a contributing factor. It would have seen him through for many years. Captain McKinley," he said slowly and a trifle thickly, "was literally scared to death!"

His wife lifted her head quickly. "What's the matter? Whatever makes you say such a thing? You adored McKinley."

Ashley turned to the manuscript on his desk. He picked up a pencil, slowly drew a line through the typewritten title. Underneath it he wrote "Appointment with Fear"—then turned back to Rosalyn.

"That's what I mean," he said, "and I should like to write a little tribute. Don't you think that a man's courage can be measured only by the degree of his fear? I think so—and by that standard, McKinley's courage was supreme."



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THE KILLER DUN



By CADDO CAMERON



Barnes jerked the rope across his hip, dug in his heels and the plunging beast almost somersaulted.

THE eyes of man and horse met over the corral fence—the horse defiant, the man somberly thoughtful. The man's eyes were pale blue, hard, sunken in their sockets, wary. The eyes of the horse were bold, brown flecked with red, hostile. The horse was a dun. So was the man. His yellow hair needed a scissors, his lean jaw a razor. The horse was an outlaw known as The Killer Dun. The man a fugitive named John Barnes.

Yesterday the horse killed a man. Dark stains on its trim forelegs were the blood of its victim. Sixty days ago John Barnes killed a man. Gaunt frame, furrows in his otherwise youthful face were scars left by flight from vengeful enemies.

Near the man stood a girl, richly dressed. A tall girl whose lithe strength and dark beauty were fit to catch the eye of a strong man. At the moment, however, he had eyes only for the horse. A

county fair crowd milled around the corral, but the girl seemed conscious alone of the man and horse. She looked with horror and loathing at the horse. She appraised the hard, ragged and trail-worn man with mixed emotions. Perhaps she compared man and horse and saw a likeness, and she may have detected outward signs of the inner struggle by which the man was torn.

Other bad horses were in there for contest riding, but The Killer Dun was the focal point of interest. As if aware of this, he stood apart from his fellows. Women spoke of him in whispers, warned their children away from the corral. Men cursed him, said that he had never been ridden, had killed four men and would kill more. Occasionally the horse swung his proud head around to look at the human enemies encircling him. He'd lash his dark tail and look defiantly at them. Always his eyes returned to the long, dun man at the fence.

The girl asked, "Do you know that horse? It behaves as if you did."

John Barnes touched the brim of his old hat, answered in the drawl of the Southwest, "No, ma'am. Heard of him, though. Reckon he's keeping an eye on me because I'm looking at him so steady."

"Why are you so interested in this killer horse?"

He wondered why *she* was asking *him* questions. Nevertheless, he answered, "I hear that Old Rocky Roades offers three thousand for a straight-up ride on The Killer Dun. That's what brought me here when I'd ought to be somewhere else."

Scorn edged her voice. "Isn't your life worth more than three thousand dollars?"

He replied bitterly, "That's what I'm trying to figure."



JOHN BARNES wouldn't spill his troubles to this woman. He wouldn't tell her that he had shot Tom Mason's boy Bob—Tom Mason the millionaire, mines and cattle. Shot in self-defense, but Mason had sworn to hang him if it took his last dollar. Man needed money to fight a case like that. A drifting bronc rider never had any money, so he had broken jail and made his getaway. Yesterday a fellow told him about this fair and

the prize for riding The Killer Dun. It set him to thinking. With three thousand he could go back and hire a good lawyer and beat that murder charge. *If he could ride the dun.* He didn't claim to be the best rider in the world—maybe a little above average, but not the best.

Of course, he probably should've let his old boss, Uncle Hank Waters, loan him the money for a lawyer. But he *could* lose that case, anyhow. Then they'd hang him. He didn't want to die in debt to Uncle Hank.

John Barnes had quickly forgotten the girl beside him. He looked at the horse, looked at the blood on its forelegs. When an outlaw like that threw a man it almost always killed him. *Was it worth the chance?* Should he gamble his life on that horse in the hopes of going back and beating the murder charge, or should he keep on running from the law?

They had put Ranger Clint Weston on his trail—the officer who always got his man, so they said. Weston wasn't far behind him now—might show up any minute—might get here before he finished the ride, if he tried to ride the dun. Had a chance to shoot Weston yesterday, but gave him the slip instead. Maybe he hadn't ought to fool around here any longer. If he kept on running, though, he'd have to kill Weston. Then he *would* be an outlaw. Hard for a man to figure what he'd ought to do.

Then, the girl asked, "Do you know the history of that horse?"

Her voice brought him around in a slow turn to face her. "No, ma'am. I just know that he's a fine horse spoilt by bad handling. Men get spoilt that way, too."

"I'll tell you about him," she said, "if you want me to. My father owns the dun."

John Barnes hid his surprise. He said, "I'll be right glad to hear it."

"My dad, Ralph Roades, *earned* the name 'Old Rocky'," she began. "In a hard country peopled by hard men he succeeded, and claims he did it by making himself harder than anybody. It's a fetish with him, this hardness. He adores mean horses and wild cattle. He wanted sons, lots of sons to grow up hard like himself. He had one child, a daughter. It nearly broke his heart."

A faint, sardonic smile. "My name is Billie-Joe. Dad calls me 'Bill'."

She frowned at the horse. "He loves The Killer Dun. That beast is a symbol of his philosophy of life. He's cruel, my dad. When the dun killed that boy yesterday he said the man was soft, had no business to monkey with bad horses. He wants only hard men around him."

Her voice went brittle. "That horse has never been ridden. He hopes that it never is, but he'll love the man that does ride it. I hope it dies! *I wish it would drop dead right now!*"

"I don't," said John Barnes.

Billie-Joe Roades looked away then. She pointed to her father coming with another man, said that the young fellow was a boy she had met at college, here on a visit.

"Dad hates Harry Cummings," she added. "Says he's soft. Harry is wealthy."

Old Rocky Roades looked the part, huge, craggy. His iron-gray hair bristled, his large face was muscled hard. Matching his long stride was a tall, athletic young man wearing a linen suit. Harry Cummings was spruce and fastidious. John Barnes mentally ran an eye over himself. Ragged and shaggy, smelling of dust, sweat and horses.

"We lost you, Bill!" boomed the old man. "What're you doin' here?"

The girl gestured at Barnes with a mittened hand. "I've been talking to this stranger. He wants to ride the dun. I have tried to talk him out of it. I'm afraid I can't."

Old Rocky shook his head. "You're soft, Bill, plumb soft."

Hands on his hips, he looked John Barnes over as if he were horse-flesh of doubtful quality. His voice belonged to him, domineering. "Can you ride a bad horse?"

"I've rode some," quietly.

"What d'you think of my dun?"

Their faces were on a level. John Barnes looked him in the eye, answered, "A good horse gone wrong. Spoilt by the man that started him."

"I started that colt!"

John Barnes' voice was low, cold. "Then you ruined the makings of a fine horse."



OTHER men had gathered at a respectful distance, but with-in easy hearing. Some exchanged surprised glances. People didn't talk that way to Old Rocky Roades. His dark face clouded. Muscles knotted on his big jaws. Billie-Joe lifted a hand, went to speak, thought better of it.

"Who are you?" rumbled the old man.

"John Barnes."

"Where from?"

"Here and there," curtly. "But that's got nothing to do with it. I'm here to ride your horse."

Old Rocky regarded the long, dun man with even greater interest. "What makes you want to straddle the meanest horse that ever tromped a man?"

"I need three thousand dollars."

"What for?"

"To spend."

Harry Cummings had been wearing a supercilious smile. He now spoke up derisively, "From his appearance, Mr. Roades, I believe the man *does* need money. You have a quaint word out here—ah, saddle-bum."

John Barnes' sunken eyes instantly turned a frosty color. His bony fist whipped out at the end of his long arm. Like the kick of a horse in speed and ferocity. It landed with a crack on Cummings' lotioned and talcumed jaw. He fell. Dust splashed. His bare head rolled in dirt churned up by many feet and hoofs.

Old Rocky grunted something resembling an oath.

Billie-Joe gasped, rushed to the fallen man.

Calmly, John Barnes told her, "He ain't hurt bad. Let him eat dirt. Be a better man when he learns the taste of it."

She glanced back at him. Her dark eyes blazed. "You'd ought to know! *I'm sick of you hard men!*"

John Barnes shrugged his lean shoulders beneath his ragged hickory shirt. Furrows gouged deeper at the roots of the stubble on his flat cheeks. He watched the girl help Cummings to his feet. Afterwards, he turned to her father. His words fell sharply, clipped off. "You've got a horse to be rode. I'm here to ride him. Let's get it over with."

"What's your hurry, Barnes?"

"It's *my* hurry. Are you and your money getting cold feet?"

Old Rocky's eyes narrowed as if he had taken a blow in the face. His fist closed. He looked hard at Barnes. "I do believe you ain't got no better sense than to think you can ride my killer horse."

"I'll ride *at* him, anyhow," snapped Barnes. "Let's go!"

The first of the forenoon contests was about to be announced. Roades said he'd arrange for the special event to precede it, and walked off.

Harry Cummings was beating dust from his fine clothing, unsteady on his feet. Billie-Joe left him and came to Barnes. Others politely moved away.

She stood very straight beneath her red sunshade, looked him in the eye, and said, "You're a hard man, John Barnes, and I don't like hard men. But, if you must ride that horse, *ride him!*"

For the first time in days, he grinned. "Thanks, lady. I'll be doing the best I can."

Old Rocky soon showed up at the corral gate where Barnes had gone with his rigging to wait. They were quickly surrounded by men interested in this stranger who was fool enough to take a chance on The Killer Dun.

"You're first," said the old man. "D'you want to try for another five hundred so's to give the folks a real show?"

"I'll try for five hundred. To hell with the show. How?"

Old Rocky grunted. "I'll have men haze the dun down yonder in front of the stands. You catch him and saddle him and mount alone in the open—no snubbin' post or horse, no help from nobody."

Men standing behind Roades vigorously shook their heads at Barnes.

He asked, "If I make a fizzle of that do I still get a chance to ride for the three thousand?"

"Of course."

"Bring on your horse."

He gathered up his rigging and walked toward the stands, dragging a crowd behind him. Mutterings in the crowd. He caught the words, "Looks half starved," and, "It's murder!" He *was* hungry. Been riding long and hard. Hadn't eaten since yesterday noon. Got to town last night. After paying his feed bill in

advance, broke. Slept at the livery stable. Out on the range a busted twister could ride the grub line. No grub line in town.

Rigging had gotten heavier over night, somehow. He'd give anything for a plate of fried beef, gravy and hot bread, a quart of coffee to wash it down. Maybe a slab of raisin or dried apple pie, too, and more coffee. Then he shrugged, and thought, *Reckon there's no law says a man can't ride a bad horse on an empty stomach.* But he'd sure like to have a little coffee.

John Barnes went to the four-pole fence guarding the stands, dropped his rigging there. He took off his gunbelt and hung it on a post. He picked up his tie rope and loaded quirt and carefully tucked them under his pants belt. Then he coiled the cotton rope of his hackamore diagonally across his shoulders so as to have the halter with him when needed.

The men who had followed him poured through the fence, onto seats. They talked. Word spread rapidly. Women's voices arose in shocked protest. A few left, leading children. He turned and ran an eye over the crowd. He looked at every man. Half expected to find the long, cold face of Clint Weston, the Ranger who always got his man. They *would* have to put Clint Weston on his trail. Just his luck, and Tom Mason's drag.



A COMMOTION exploded at the corral. Dust boiled up. A horse screamed in rage.

Near the gate a bunch of riders fanned out. The Killer Dun pranced into view. He didn't race away in mad flight as any untamed horse should have done. He halted. He arched his neck, glared at the riders, lashed his tail. Then he blew hard, rattling the "rollers in his nose." A familiar sound to John Barnes, drifting bronc rider.

He picked up his catch rope, shook out two coils in a small loop and flipped it back and forth on the ground. It opened nicely. An honest rope, this hard-twist. He didn't hear what the announcer was saying, didn't care. He wasn't putting on a show.

But he did hear *her* voice. "Good luck, John Barnes!"

He looked back. Billie-Joe was taking a seat down in front, three rows up. He

grinned again, touched his hat. Her encouragement brought a warmth of pleasure to a young man lately turned cold by injustice, daily growing colder and more remote from society, a man at the borderline of outlawry.

Harry Cummings detached himself from a group in an aisle. He stalked to the fence nearby, climbed to the top pole. He called out, "I don't want to miss anything when that horse tramples you into the ground!"

John Barnes nodded curtly. "Better not sit there, Mister. It ain't a safe place for women and children."

Cummings flushed to his hair. In the stands men laughed, some women, too.

They were trying to shove the dun toward the stands. He didn't want to go. The riders cautiously kept their distance. Their mounts fought to get farther away. A man whirled the honda end of his rope, snapped it, hit the dun in the flank. The outlaw squatted, spun like a giant cat. It leaped. Its teeth slashed at the horse's throat, missed the windpipe, ripped off a patch of hide. The rider struck with his quirt. The outlaw whirled again. Its hind leg darted out. Its hoof landed with a thud audible in the stands. The rider stiffened, slumped. His horse crashed into others in a sidewise lunge away from the dun. The man rode off loose in the saddle, supported by a companion, both hands gripping a splintered leg.

John Barnes narrowed his eyes, tightened his jaws. The Killer Dun was a fit name. It was a killer naked or under saddle, a ground fighter. Most range stallions would fight that way in defense of their mares, but he had encountered only two outlaw geldings that would try to kill a man mounted or afoot, except when roped. One of these he had shot to save his life. He now knew why Old Rocky had tempted him with an extra five hundred, why those men had tried to warn him. He thought of his gunbelt on the fence behind him. But that wouldn't do. He wouldn't get three thousand for shooting the horse. He moved farther from the fence.

He watched the riders scatter to escape the dun. In the space of seconds he thought of many things. . . . A huge wolf torn in two by the kick of a mare. The

panther that dropped on a colt, almost decapitated by a gelding's teeth. The men he had seen broken, maimed and killed beneath the hoofs of enraged horses. And there was his horse-camp partner who lost an arm to an outlaw's teeth . . . John Barnes thought of these and other things and was afraid. Sweat trickled down his ribs, down his thighs. He moved still farther from the tempting safety of the fence and his six-shooter.

The hazers went to yelling, waving hats. One had a slicker. The dun looked around at them, head high, tail high and lashing. *He* wasn't afraid. Then he came on at a trot, little ears swiveling, nostrils expanded and quivering. Suddenly the ears shot forward, froze that way. Uncertainty vanished. He moved straight ahead with a fixed purpose in his stride, straight at the man on the ground with a rope. Suddenly the outlaw charged. His ears dropped flat. His head thrust out at the end of his neck and almost in line with it. His hoofs tore grass and earth and flung it.

Women screamed.

John Barnes shifted his loop to his left hand. He took his quirt with his right, reversed it. Half crouched he stood squarely in the path of the charging beast—eleven hundred pounds of fury controlled by a sharp intellect equal or superior to a dog's and armed with the destructive power of a tiger, the ferocity of a wolverine. In its last lunge the horse lifted higher its forefeet to strike. Simultaneously it slashed with its teeth almost quicker than the eye could follow.

John Barnes shifted barely enough to escape the crushing hoofs. He struck with his quirt and all the strength he had. The shot-loaded handle crunched on the outlaw's forehead, caught the knowledge bump between its ears. At that precise instant the dun's teeth snapped shut on clothing and skin beneath his right arm. A lightning wrench virtually stripped him to the waist, flung him staggering, bleeding.

The stands groaned.

Partially stunned by the blow the horse crumpled at the knees when its feet came down. Its muzzle plowed dust. Snarled in remnants of shirt and vest, John Barnes missed a chance. By the time he had freed

his arms and cleared his rope, the outlaw was up and spinning away. Barnes took a quick step forward. His long arm whipped out. The rope shot from his hand like an iron bar with a ring in its end. The ring caught the dun's forefeet. It clamped shut. Barnes jerked the rope across his hip, dug in his heels. The plunging beast almost somersaulted, landed on shoulder and side, jarred the ground. It lay still, breathless.

The stands cheered wildly.



JOHN BARNES ran and knelt on the dun's head. He now worked fast and with the precision of a machine. Never a wasted move. The horse was quickly blindfolded, haltered, hobbled and side-lined closely—hindfoot to forefeet with enough slack to stand—saddle in place without blanket and screwed down to stay. The outlaw seemed to realize that it had lost the first round. It waited with malevolent patience for another chance. It made but one hostile move.

In his haste Barnes got a little careless. He momentarily overlooked the fact that this was a horse of unusual intelligence, a horse that respected but didn't fear a rope and wasn't paralyzed by blindfolding. He bent and jerked off the footropes. The outlaw's head whipped blindly around at him. Its teeth snapped like a rifle shot in his ear. An inch closer and the man would have lost the side of his face!

He straightened, hackamore rope in hand. He didn't curse the horse or strike it, for the beast was fighting him fairly with only the weapons nature gave it. He stepped back, took up a notch in his chap and pants belts. He drew a long breath, wishing that he might sit down and rest a while before the ride. Hunger was taking its toll in weakness. Wet with sweat; leg tremors; heart pounding.

The stands cheered, and cheered again.

John Barnes looked that way, looking for the law. His eyes first found the red sunshade in the third row. It waved at him. Cummings sat on the fence like a buzzard waiting for him to die. Two men came around the end of the stands. One wore a star—County Sheriff or Town Marshal. Texas Rangers wore neither

badge nor uniform. The other man was dressed like a cowman, but—in the shadow of his big hat, *the long cold face of Ranger Clint Weston!*

Notwithstanding his sweat, John Barnes went cold inside. Weston wouldn't wait for him to make the ride. Be afraid to let him mount the horse, afraid that he'd somehow stampede the outlaw and make his getaway. What he'd give for just ten minutes more! He'd ride this infernal horse in spite of hell. Then he'd collect his thirty-five hundred and go back with Weston and lick that damned murder charge. He'd do it—if *he just had ten minutes more!*

While these thoughts flashed through Barnes' mind, the officer and Ranger moved along in front of the stands. People hollered at Weston. He hollered back. Once he tipped his hat. Billie-Joe Roades came down across the seats toward him. They moved farther from the stands, over to the fence near Cummings. They talked there. Old Rocky appeared from somewhere and joined them. He argued and gestured. Weston shook his head.

John Barnes practically held his breath. He suspected what was going on. Maybe he'd ought to straddle the dun and go to riding . . . No, Weston wouldn't hesitate to shoot the horse and come and get his man. Weston always got his man—one way or another. Barnes rubbed sweat, dust and blood from his eyes and wondered what he'd ought to do.

Weston shook his head with more determination than ever. He brushed Old Rocky aside, went to climb the fence. Billie-Joe snatched his six-shooter from its holster. She jammed its muzzle into the small of the Ranger's back! He stood there, holding onto the fence.

John Barnes quit wondering what he'd ought to do. Grimly, he told The Killer Dun, "She's her old man's daughter, after all. Now, show me the best you've got. No holds barred!"

He cheeked the dun, pulled its head around, watchful of its murderous teeth. He slid into the saddle smoothly, quickly. The outlaw quivered in every nerve. He whipped off the blind. From that instant the world was John Barnes and the horse under him. For him all else ceased to exist.

The dun's opening attack was trickery. It reared, up and up, reaching for the sky until a dangerous back-fall was imminent. The rider made ready to leave the saddle to avoid being crushed. Sensing that the man had loosened, the outlaw hurled itself in a high twisting lunge, forequarters one way, hindquarters the opposite. It landed on forelegs like oak posts. The jar was brutal. John Barnes absorbed some of it with flexed knees. Muzzle to the ground, the horse bellowed—a hoarse cry of satanic rage.

The stands cheered; this was spectacular riding.

What followed was unspectacular, but man-killing. A series of short, jarring, wrenching jumps incredibly fast and no two alike in succession. Backward and forward, from side to side, never far, pitching on a dime, half-turns in the air, sunfishing—head to rump on one side, a lightning snap, head to rump on the other side, showing its belly to the sun—weaving, shaking fit to shed its hair, popping leather with every jump. The human body wasn't made to endure such punishment.

Horsemen in the stands muttered among themselves.

John Barnes sat loose and flexible in the saddle. No man could match strength with the beast under him and to try would be fatal. He kept his seat by a miraculous sense of balance and cultivated foresight. He knew horse anatomy. The twitching, flexing and knotting of muscles told him what to expect and where it would come from.



ONCE when the outlaw came down on stiff legs, all four feet together, Barnes' head flopped and his ear hit his bony shoulder. The ear bled. Pain pounded inside his skull as if his spine had been driven upward through it. His nose bled. His lips were painted crimson, for he had bitten them . . . Backward! Backward! Backward! Why didn't the damned horse pitch straight ahead in easy fairgrounds style! . . . Now he saw its ears through a heavy film of red, though he wasn't bleeding about the eyes. Suddenly, he couldn't see—*couldn't see at all!*

Old Rocky had demanded a straight-up ride. John Barnes was giving him a straight-up ride—left hand holding the hackamore rope, right swinging free, spurs not anchored in the cinch. Though for seconds only, it seemed like minutes that he rode straight up while blinded by pain. He felt the horse crabbing it—a violent sidewise movement to the right. Fence over there somewhere. He jerked up his right leg to escape it. They hit the fence, horse and man. The fence sprung, shook, held. Sight came back to Barnes!

Almost in the shadow of the horse lay Harry Cummings!

The man was almost crazy with fear. He scrambled desperately to get under the fence, moved in the wrong direction. Ranger Clint Weston went to vault the fence. His spur hooked on the top pole. He fell headlong across the man he intended to rescue!

The Killer Dun reared, lifted high its forefeet, hoofs and legs stained by the blood of the man it killed yesterday. In the fractional part of a second, with the speed of thought, temptation assailed John Barnes again . . . *Let the dun kill or cripple Clint Weston. Try to save him by throwing the horse and you may cripple yourself so that you can't finish the ride. Get shed of Weston. Then if you're thrown you can get away anyhow. Get shed of Weston!* From the side of his eye he saw a blurred spot of color near the fence—the red sunshade. *You ain't a coward or a murderer, John Barnes. You're a hard man. Fight like a man!*

With every ounce of his waning strength and all the skill he owned, he jerked the outlaw's head left, threw his weight that way. Horse and man went down in a breath-taking side-fall! At the last instant he was able to pull his left leg clear, land on his feet. His knees crumpled. He hung onto the hackamore rope.

Barnes looked across the prone and breathless horse at Cummings, and spoke as he would to a dog that had followed unbidden, "Go home!"

He ignored the Ranger.

He didn't hear the yelling, screaming, cheering stands. He didn't see Billie-Joe

(Continued on page 127)

GIANT AGAINST THE SKY

A
FACT
STORY



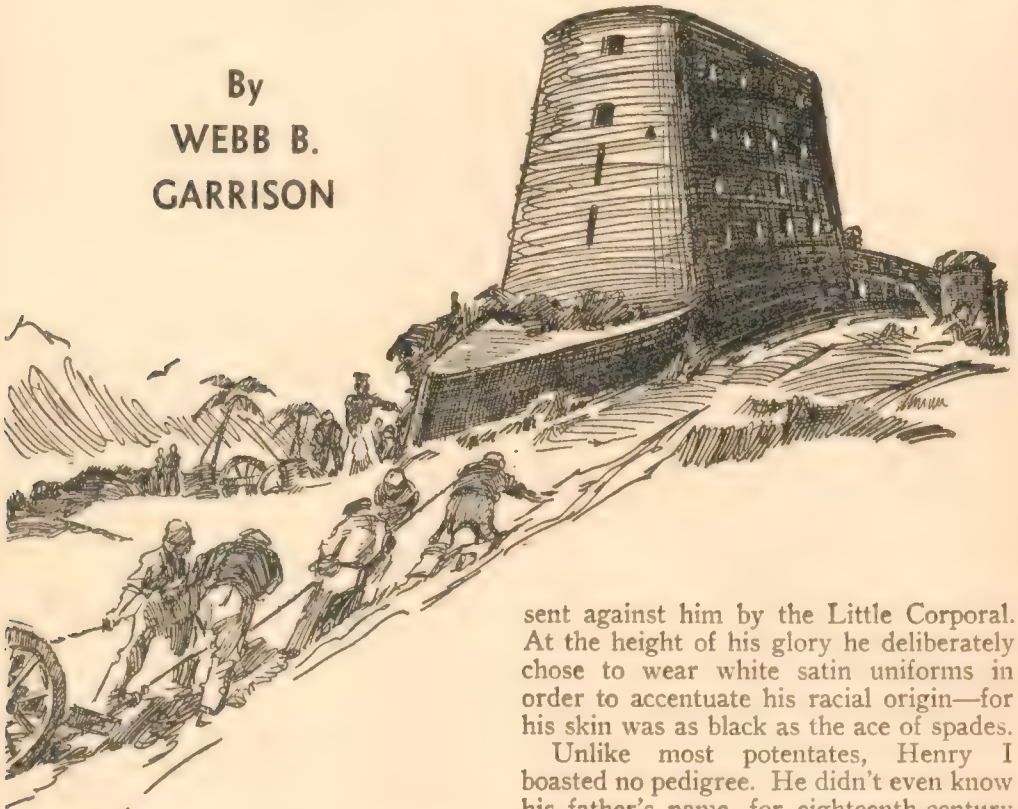
IN THE 450 years that have elapsed since the western hemisphere was invaded by European civilization, only one real king has flourished on this side of the Atlantic. According to all the laws of probability, his fantastic career could not have taken place.

Henry I, King of the North, never learned to read or write. But he had five secretaries and a full-time librarian. Among the court officers was one whose only duty was to dress His Majesty's hair. Yet he was a man's man.

When barefooted, which was whenever possible, he towered a full six feet four inches, one of the most superb physical specimens nature ever molded. A ferocious and relentless fighter, he killed at least sixty men in hand-to-hand combat and in duels.

He built the world's first air-conditioned palace, and with no resource other than brute man-power threw up a gigantic fortress that is one of the breath-taking wonders of the western world. He defied Napoleon and defeated the armies

By
**WEBB B.
GARRISON**



Every piece of building material, every pound of provisions, every barrel of powder and case of shot had to be dragged up the steep incline by brute force.

sent against him by the Little Corporal. At the height of his glory he deliberately chose to wear white satin uniforms in order to accentuate his racial origin—for his skin was as black as the ace of spades.

Unlike most potentates, Henry I boasted no pedigree. He didn't even know his father's name, for eighteenth-century colonists in the West Indies bred their slaves like cattle, and did not bother to keep records of the blood lines of the abundant black babies.

The future king was probably born in the spring of 1767. Little is known of the event except that the Frenchman who owned his mother, more tolerant than most sugar cane planters, permitted her to recuperate a full week before returning to her work in the field. And he indulgently let the boy grow to the age of seven

before putting him to work as apprentice to the plantation's stone mason.

Five years of hard manual labor put muscles in the boy's arms and hatred in his heart. In a moment of bitter defiance, he ran away.

Had he been captured, death would have been the penalty—no soft, easy end, by hanging, but a grim, lingering thing of horror. He had seen a captured runaway tied down and the skin flayed from his writhing body, only a few square inches stripped off at a time, in order that death might not come too soon. And he had watched plantation owners play at a weird game of bowls. A runaway slave had been buried in sand, only his head protruding. Then the gay, the carefree, the debonair French colonists had rolled cannon-balls at the head of the poor wretch.

But the future king was more fortunate. He was spotted by a sea captain who magnanimously refused to turn him in to his owner. The captain preferred to take the boy north to Saint Domingue (now Haiti), where he could be sold in the slave market for enough gold louis to line an honest seaman's pockets.

The most productive and valuable farm land in the world at that time, the big island offered a prize market for black flesh. More than half a million West Africans had been imported, but maltreatment kept thinning their ranks. Fourteen hours a day in the tropic sun under the whip of an overseer was calculated to burn the manhood out of the best of them.

Arriving at the port, the shrewd captain thought it best not to dispose of his prize under the name given him at birth. So he called the boy Christophe, because he had been captured on the island of St. Christopher.



YOUNG Christophe passed through several hands, was finally bought by a prosperous free Negro who kept an inn at Cap François, the port near which Columbus had anchored in December, 1492. After some years as a stable boy, he was promoted to the position of billiard marker—a post that carried with it an opportunity to receive an occasional tip from a white patron who had guzzled too

much rum or had been lucky at the gambling table.

But as billiard marker, Christophe was forced to stand silently and listen to the chatter of the players. Like men in every age, they talked mostly of women. They joked of their Negro mistresses, and with contemptuous shrugs dismissed the children that these women bore. Many a mulatto baby was destined to grow up as the slave of his own father. Outnumbered by more than ten to one, the whites could not, they assured one another, make any concession to a slave, even though little African blood flowed in his veins.

Christophe listened, burning with anger, but gave no outward sign. Only once was he so indiscreet as to enter a conversation. Two patrons, deep in their cups, quarreled over a point. The young marker respectfully pointed out that one of the players was in error, whereupon both turned on him and felled him with a rain of blows from their cues. They and all their fellow colonials had a conviction that black men belonged to an order of animals, inferior to the human race.

But the fire of rebellion was beginning to flicker. Back in the mother country, the Bastille had fallen. Men were talking of freedom, even for those whose skin was dark. The National Assembly actually seated a delegate elected by the free mulattoes of Saint Domingue—but when he returned home the plantation owners broke him upon the rack.

A few thousand slaves attempted a premature revolt, were crushed and executed without mercy. When the French captured a black officer, they would place him in stocks and nail his epaulettes to his shoulders. Only after he lost consciousness would they complete the execution by nailing his cap to his head.

Both Spain and England, at war with France and eager to add the rich plantations to their own colonies, sent troops to Saint Domingue in 1793. In desperation, France freed all slaves and organized a colonial army. Among the first to shoulder a rifle was Christophe. Like his fellows he fought ostensibly for France but actually for freedom. After seven years of war, the victor proved to be neither France nor Spain nor England, but the blacks of the island.

Napoleon was unwilling to permit so rich a prize to slip through his fingers uncontested. He assembled the greatest fleet that his nation had ever seen. Under the command of the Corsican's own brother-in-law, 22,000, hardened veterans of the Italian and Austrian campaigns sailed to subdue the untrained black rebels.

The mighty armada arrived off Cap François early in 1802. By this time a general in the army, Christophe was military governor of the proud city of sixty thousand, world-famous as "The Paris of the West." Recognizing his inability to withstand the French siege, Christophe ruthlessly put the torch to eight hundred of the finest buildings in the city. Then he fled to the mountains, leaving only a smoking, desolate ruin.

Sporadic fighting, in which both sides lost heavily, was followed by a truce. The French guaranteed amnesty to all rebels and freedom to all former slaves. Under these terms, the blacks capitulated. Christophe and his ally Dessalines were made generals in the colonial army. But the smell of treachery was in the air.

Toussaint L'Ouverture, key leader of the rebellion, was seized and carried to France, where he died in prison. The French embarked on a reign of terror that left Saint Domingue dripping with blood. Suspected rebels were chained wrist to wrist in a long line, taken aboard ship and forced to jump into the sea. Others were crammed into prisons, doors and windows barricaded and sulphur candles burned until the blacks suffocated. Bloodhounds imported from Cuba were taught to tear the vitals out of chained Negroes, providing a pleasant Sunday afternoon sport.

Meanwhile, pretending loyalty to the oppressor, Christophe was gathering arms and men. Early in 1803, he joined forces with Dessalines and they led a second rebellion. This time, it was organized. And Christophe had, somehow, found 30,000 rifles.

Screaming the worst voodoo curses of the Dark Continent, the former slaves fell upon Napoleon's veterans. One after another they won a series of engagements. And yellow fever came to their aid. Within a matter of months, the French were driven into the sea.



JANUARY 1, 1804, was selected for the official declaration of independence of the Republic of Haiti. Dessalines was elected Governor-General. But by summer, the taste of democracy had begun to pall. The squat black donned a jeweled crown and assumed the title of emperor.

Dessalines' twenty concubines ranged in color from jet black to light tan, and he was far too preoccupied with them to bother with any but the most urgent matters of state. Christophe, a far more capable executive, was relegated to a secondary position as governor of the northern half of the island.

Under Dessalines' capricious tyranny, farming gradually came to a complete halt. Cannon-raked towns were left to rot. Irrigation canals became choked with undergrowth. Sugar mills were abandoned to the encroaching jungle. Only the coffee plantations were still productive despite a decade of neglect. But the blacks were too indifferent to gather the crop. Foreign trade came to a dead stand-still.

Even the abundance of wild plantains and bananas proved insufficient to keep the bellies of the victors full. They began to quarrel among themselves, and Dessalines was murdered—some say at the instigation of Christophe.

At any rate, the big warrior recognized the hand of destiny. His hour had come. For months he rode over the island seeking to set up a constitutional government for the whole of Haiti. But he was not popular in the mulatto-dominated south—his skin was too infernally black. Democratic means failing, Christophe assumed dictatorial powers as chief governor of the northern half of Haiti.

His one burning ambition was to weld the rabble of freed slaves into a great Negro nation. By 1811, at 44, he realized only too well that there was much to do—and so little time.

Only royalty could make Haiti prosperous and strong. Donning his most brilliant uniform of peacock blue, faced with scarlet and festooned with gold braid, Christophe solemnly announced to his soldiers that they were henceforth to address him as His Majesty, Henry I, King of the North.

The choice of names resulted from two motives. It would be comparatively easy to learn to write "Henry" to sign royal decrees. And the king hated the memory of his former masters, the French. He would destroy all trace of them, make English ~~the~~ the chief language of the new state.

Haiti must be made strong, and at once. The former slaves spoke half a hundred dialects, as yet had no national feeling. Back in the hills, voodoo rites were still practiced. In the eerie shadows of moonlight nights, black men forgot that they had been touched by civilization. On many a hilltop, a brimming bowl of blood was passed around a circle of worshippers. Eager hands trembled, and lips parted in anticipation of the heady draught. In more than one Haitian market human flesh was sold as "pork," and it was not uncommon for ghouls to disinter and eat a fresh-buried corpse.

Only an iron hand could keep order and give purpose to a nation comprised of such citizens. Christophe moved swiftly and with precision. He drafted the "Code Henry," an elaborate set of laws governing every aspect of life. He declared the throne to hold title to every acre of land, the produce to be sold for the benefit of the state. Cattle and sheep were also made a royal monopoly.

Christophe's black subjects made no objection to his decrees—but they refused to go to work. A favorable balance of trade meant less than nothing to them. Very well, their king would force them to sweat! The one essential object in Haiti was the gourd, used for making dishes, drinking vessels, bottles, and even cooking pots.

At their king's order, his soldiers collected every green gourd in the land. When he had accumulated a stock-pile of six million of them, he began bartering them back to his subjects for coffee, sugar, and tobacco. The produce Christophe shipped to England and America, sold for gold, and established a stable metallic currency. The basic unit of the Haitian monetary system became known, appropriately enough, as the *gourde*—a name it still bears.

Weed-covered acres were cleared, mills and factories rebuilt with frenzied haste.

Sullen blacks who had rebelled at long hours of work for a white master now toiled doubly hard for an even more exacting tyrant of their own hue. Money flowed into the national treasury, and a police system was established to force obedience to the Code Henry.

Though Christophe had killed his share of enemies in duels, he outlawed the practice. Divorce was prohibited, and adultery made a major crime. One of the few white women remaining on the island was caught with her dusky paramour and carried before the king for judgment. The booming voice of the giant ruler carried just a tinge of mockery as he ordered that she be made to mount on a donkey, nude and facing the animal's tail. In this indecorous position she was forced to ride through the principal streets of the capital city.

Christophe established a crude state hospital—the first on this side of the Atlantic. He laid plans for a system of public schools, and decreed that English should be taught in them. An envoy was sent to Britain to employ teachers. Even a university, to include a medical college, was envisioned for the future.

An hereditary nobility was established, with four score titles distributed to the most loyal adherents of the king. True, His Majesty's knowledge of English was limited and ill-bred foreigners snickered when they learned that he had created a Duke of Marmalade, a Count of Lemonade.

But no one laughed at the administrative ability of the one-time slave. The walls of the national treasury soon bulged with gold; within a few years the surplus grew to the staggering sum of twelve million pounds, sterling.

Trade was thriving, and the vast productive acres of Haiti poured shiploads of tobacco, sugar, cotton and coffee into the ports of Europe and America. Trained only in work and war, the illiterate black king knew how to drive men to accomplish what he wanted.



TWO things more he must have: a palace, and a fortress strong enough to withstand all the armies of Europe. Fifteen miles from his capital city (old Cap Fran-

gois, re-named C pe Henry) Christophe erected his principal residence.

Four stories in height, Sans Souci was built of brick and finished in stucco. All floors were of marble, and the walls were panelled with the finest of hardwood, hung with art treasures imported from Europe. There were banquet halls, a royal chapel, a library, audience chamber, printing shop, barracks for the palace guard, and quarters for the royal family and their attendants. A mountain stream was diverted from its course in order to flow under the main floor, keeping it delightfully cool in the most torrid weeks of summer.

For his personal guard, Christophe selected one thousand men, each at least six feet tall. Their uniform consisted of white satin pantaloons and dark green coats with crimson facings, covered with gold embroidery. The queen was given a guard of honor, made up of fifty women armed with sabers, bows and arrows. No court in Europe could boast of so impressive a retinue, and Sans Souci was by all odds the most magnificent structure in the New World.

Yet Christophe knew that a real king could not be content with a single palace. So he built five others on a slightly more modest scale, supplemented them with sixteen chateaux and hunting lodges.

His subjects were beginning to murmur as, more and more, they felt the weight of his iron heel. But the stalwart ruler had other and greater work to do. If, perchance, a greedy foreign power should send an army against him, he must be ready with an impregnable fortress.

So Christophe summoned those of his subjects who had some knowledge of engineering. When they diplomatically suggested that his scheme was impossible, the king drew his saber. "When Christophe speaks," he boomed, fixing them implacably with his hypnotic eyes, "nothing is impossible!"

Within a matter of weeks, workmen completed the formidable task of clearing a circular space at the peak of the highest mountain in the district. Using native stone and bricks molded on the spot, Christophe threw against the sky a citadel such as the world had never seen.

The walls varied from twenty to thirty

feet in thickness. Five stories in height, the immense structure was shaped in such a manner that it continued the contour of the mountain cone. Provision rooms and powder magazines were hewn out of solid rock. The great roof was arranged to catch rain water and send it into a cistern with a capacity of more than a hundred thousand gallons. Enough provisions were stored to last a thousand men for three years.

La Ferriere, as Christophe called his citadel, was complete with a blacksmith shop, hospital, bake shop, and parade ground. Even garbage chutes were provided, leading from the big kitchens to outlets above a sheer cliff. It is one of the few buildings in the world to have arches without keystones, made possible by the use of bricks each of which was made symmetrically wider at the top than the bottom.

Christophe realized that an impregnable fortress must be difficult to reach. La Ferriere had that qualification. Built at an altitude of 2600 feet, the only approach lay along a twisting trail that crossed eight miles of rugged heavily forested mountain terrain.

When completed, La Ferriere was larger than the Tower of London. Yet every piece of building material, every pound of provisions, every barrel of powder and case of shot had to be dragged up the steep incline by brute force. Modern engineers marvel that it was done without machinery of any sort, and by men without technical training.

Four hundred huge bronze cannon of six- and eight-inch bore were dragged up the mountain one by one. The miracle was accomplished with man-power maddened by fear.

Christophe himself directed the work, and he was completely merciless in his orders. On one occasion a squad of a hundred men found themselves incapable of moving a cannon up the slope. The king angrily ordered them to pull. They strained without avail.

"Every tenth man fall out!" ordered the black ruler. As they obeyed, he turned to his guards: "Shoot them!" Rifles cracked, and ninety men in a frenzy of fear hauled the big weapon up the mountain.



LA FERRIERE cost the lives of 20,000 workmen. The subjects of the black king began to whisper, and soon their voice rose to a sullen murmur. They resented their ruler's practice of carrying a telescope with him, spying on men in distant fields to make certain that they were never idle.

The former slaves did not share his vision of a rich and powerful Negro empire, nor were they happy at being forced to work for its establishment. The illiterate giant who a decade earlier had been hailed as a liberator came to be known as Christophe the Cruel.

Faster and faster he drove them. Yet he lashed himself even harder. Five hours of sleep was all that he permitted himself, and many days he was in the saddle fourteen hours.

He visited fortifications, mills, schools, and plantations, always goading his workmen on to greater speed.

His subjects grew to curse his name, but they feared him more than they hated him. They talked of revolt, but none dared attempt it.

Then, in August, 1820, the giant whom no human could daunt was felled by paralysis. For two days he lingered at the point of death. Every rooster, every donkey within five miles of the place was killed, in order that complete silence might prevail.

But at night drums whispered through the hills, and everywhere peasants danced in glee as they heard the weird message. Christophe the Cruel would lash them no more.

Ambitious army officers spearheaded a rebellion, and their marching song offered free rum, saucy mulatto wenches—and no more work.

Christophe's court physician, a European, gently told the stricken giant that medical science could do nothing for him.

In a wild burst of defiance, the king sent for an African witch doctor. After a brisk rub-down with raw rum and red pepper, he attempted to review the loyal remnant of his once-proud army.

They marched as proudly as ever. But disaster was in the air, and Christophe knew it. He dismissed his courtiers, sent away the servants. Embracing his queen, he ordered her to take the princesses and flee to England. Long ago, anticipating just such an emergency, he had deposited to her credit in the Bank of England £1,000,000.

With tremendous effort, the broken warrior dressed himself in a new white uniform and crawled painfully to his bedchamber.

As the first wave of rebels entered the palace, they heard a shot. Christophe the Cruel had made an exit worthy of a king. A silver bullet, molded months previously, was embedded in his brain.

Disobeying his order to board a waiting ship, the queen, princesses, and a single faithful servant remained beside the huge sprawling corpse that invoked memories so fearful no looter dared touch it. That night they made a crude stretcher and, stumbling under their burden, labored up the long trail to Christophe's mighty citadel.

There they found their goal—a pit of freshly-mixed builder's lime. Hastily dumped into it, the royal corpse sank into the corrosive paste until a huge black fist, still clenched in defiance, was all that could be seen of Henry I, King of the North.

But the wise old men of the island know that when the moon is a silver crescent against the Haitian sky, a great ebony wraith in an immaculate satin uniform stalks the deserted corridors of La Ferriere, still bearing a crown upon his head and fabulous dreams of empire in his savage heart.





THE CAMP-FIRE

Where Readers, Writers and Adventurers Meet

WHEN old Cap Sparhawk bites off a fresh chaw of Peerless Plug, r'ars back in the deacon seat of the Steamboat Hotel and rattles the brass spittoon twenty paces away, we're in luck! That's just the cantankerous old codger's way of getting ready to spin us a new yarn about Thunder Bay McCargo, and his Great Lakes schooner *Minong*. . . . So here's the fabulous McCargo again, spraddle-legged at the wheel of his gallant little two-master as she skips gaily over the waves—all sail set, a mermaid on her bow and a bone in her teeth—into a new episode in the life and loves of her lusty skipper. She gets under way on page 58. See you on board!

Well, one thing leads to another in this business—when McCargo last appeared in these pages back in February, the author, Bill Ratigan, sent along some informal remarks which we printed in the *Camp-Fire*. In connection with McCargo's famous harmonizing quartet, Ratigan mentioned the SPEBSQSA—the "Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America." John Richard Young noted the reference, was intrigued, got curious and decided to look into the origin of that unique organization. The following dissertation on close harmony is the happy result of his investigations—

A man named Little was walking through a deserted passage of the New York subway

one midnight last winter when he suddenly heard men singing in what he recognized as "close harmony." Following the sound like a hound on a hot scent, he came upon four men, bundled against the chill, singing "Down by the Old Mill Stream." Little recognized kindred spirits when he heard them; without any invitation he joined in. For half an hour there in the frigid underground tunnel, unmindful of the cold, the men sang.

At last Little asked, "You fellows always sing here in the subway?"

"Been singing here every Thursday night for nine years," one of the quartet answered. "Nobody interrupts us, no amateurs can barge in and spoil the harmony—and this spot has the best damn acoustics in New York."

No, these men were not addlepaters. Their weekly meetings in the subway for nine years are merely a typical example of the enthusiasm of members of the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, Incorporated.

Perhaps you have never heard of the S. P. E. B. S. Q. S. A. Most persons when they first hear of it put on a listen-do-you-think-I'm-a-sucker expression. But there is such a society and probably no other organization can boast of so happily fanatical a membership. SPEB (as barbershoppers refer to it), though founded only a few years ago, is already an international organization with 245 chapters scattered over the United States and in Canada, as well as a few in the armed forces.

SPEB is the brain-child of a Tulsa, Oklahoma, lawyer—Owen C. Cash. Like many another man before and since, Cash was born with a taste amounting to a mania for the sweet, deep sound of masculine singing, the more informal the better.

The trouble was he could not find enough such singfests to satisfy his taste. So Mr. Cash decided to do something about it.

In 1938 he wrote a letter to fourteen friends inviting them to "peaceable assembly" for the enjoyment of "the last remaining vestige of human liberty," about the only privilege guaranteed by the Bill of Rights which had not been in some way limited or put under government control—barbershop quartet singing.

Not fourteen but thirty-six harmony-starved singers showed up for that first meeting. Then they began bringing their friends. As the group grew the news got around. From all over the country men wrote to Cash: "Quick, brother! How can we join?" Today the society numbers its members in the thousands. It publishes a quarterly magazine, *The Harmonizer*, and even has an Institute of Barbershop Harmony Committee composed of three trained musicians who rearrange popular old songs so that they can be sung in true barbershop style.

Joining SPEB is as simple today as it was in the beginning. All you need is a burning desire to sing. You don't even have to be able to sing well. Indeed, men who fancy themselves as frustrated Carusos don't last long in barbership quartets. Showoffs and incurable soloists are not wanted. The end and aim of barbershop singing is *harmony*. SPEB makes it possible for the man of little, if any, singing talent to soar right out of this world on the illusion that he sounds as good as Lawrence Tibbett—with the vocal assistance of three other fellows.

Barbershoppers are simply men who would rather sing than do anything else. They don't need music. Few of them can read notes. Least of all do they need an audience to spur them on. They are their own favorite audience. Harmony is in the bones.

Exactly what is barbershop harmony? How does it differ from other forms of group singing? And why is it called barbershop?

In the days of handlebar mustaches, individual shaving mugs and straight razors, small town and neighborhood barbershops were in many ways a kind of men's club. Men came in not merely to be shaved and shorn but to swap news and gossip, read *The Police Gazette* and get away from women. In this clubby atmosphere singing developed naturally.

Since few of the singers had any musical training, the form their singing took was spontaneous and improvisational, a type of folk music as distinctively American as cowboy songs. The all-important quality in this singing was the harmony. Timing, expression, even word sense were frequently sacrificed to this end.

In barbershop quartet singing the melody is usually sung by the Lead. On each melody note there is at least one harmonizing chord (known as a *swipe*), though there

might be as many as five. The Tenor part, comparable to a high alto, is usually above the Lead. Baritone and Bass round out the quartet. As a rule the Lead carries the melody notes, but sometimes they are "traded around." Occasionally the Lead sings a few solo notes; then Tenor, Baritone and Bass join in on the following chords.

The ability to improvise on a melody, which always marks a great barbershop quartet, is essentially the same as "swing" in jazz. The singers, without losing harmony, embroider and embellish a melody on the spur of the moment. Thus perhaps the chief reason for the popularity of barbershop quartet singing is that it does so much to help satisfy man's natural desire to "make music" himself. A true barbershop quartet is never accompanied by an instrumentalist.

The type of songs generally favored are the good old-fashioned kind—"Sweet Adeline," "When the Maple Leaves Were Falling," "Just Break the News to Mother," "That Old Girl of Mine." A good barbershop foursome, however, can go to town on anything—"Hot Lips," for instance.

In 1939 SPEB held its first annual quartet contest in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The following year promoters of the World's Fair in New York invited the society to hold its second "National" there. From then on SPEB'S fame skyrocketed. The annual contest now is international.

In the International Contest—the "World's Series of Barbershop"—judging is done by eight experts working as four two-man teams. Each pair of specialists judges the competing quartets on one of the following points:

1. *Harmony Accuracy*—all voices in a quartet are closely checked for any variation from the general tone. Count: 30%.
2. *Voice Expression*—blend of voices, shading of tone, enunciation, timing, rhythm, etc. Count: 30%.
3. *Song Arrangement*—including both song and voice arrangements. Songs must be sung in true barbershop style. Count: 30%.
4. *Stage Presence*—poise and costume. Count: 10%.

Each quartet is limited to two songs, may not sing less than four minutes or more than six. Violation of this time limit is severely penalized.

With this system, not even the judges know the winners until the scores are added up. A perfect score is 2000 points.

Already barbershop harmonizing seems to be going the way of the barbershop. Women have already invaded the field, as they invaded the barbershop and the barroom. But the boys don't seem to mind. Some even coach the girls in the true old barbershop style.

Barbershoppers' conventions are as merry as they are musical. Good fellowship prevails. Among barbershoppers no man is a stranger. Conveners wear lapel

tags telling the world their names and the fact that "I Sing Baritone" (or Lead or Tenor or Bass). Hotels during conventions resound with harmony. Impromptu quartets harmonize all over the place, including the lobby. Professional jealousy is entirely absent.

At the 1946 convention in Cleveland a hotel guest picked up her room phone to call a friend. An operator downstairs at the switchboard pleaded, "Please! Won't you wait until this quartet in the lobby is finished? I want to hear 'em."

The caller not only obliged, but hung onto the phone to listen in herself.

TWO brief entries for the roster of the Writers' Brigade this month. First, W. V. Athanas, author of "Hell or Slack Water" on page 38, comes up with a bit of background on life in the big woods.

I was born in a railroad section house, and shortly thereafter, my father went into logging railroad construction. Boomered around all over the West, following the logging camps and jobs, in time to get in on the last of the horse-logging days, and the beginning of the modern mechanization of the woods.

I well remember the first logging "cat" (track-type tractor) in the woods. This job, in the Blue Mountain section of Oregon, had a huge trail chute, a gently sloping affair on which two horses slid as many as eight or ten logs at a turn. The little "cat" was being tried out on the chute along with the horses, and its outrageous bellowing had the hayburners in such a state of tizzy that they were just as likely as not to try to shinny up a tree, harness and all, every time the thing came within a half a mile of them.

But eventually, the mechanical monstrosities won out, and you'll seldom see the big, wise animals in the timber any more.

Went to work in the tall uncut at an age that had to be lied about, in order to stay clear of the laws regarding child labor. Guess I was a fairly husky child, because I held a job with the men for several years before I had to take up shaving seriously. Most of the memories of the woods bring to mind long hours of back-breaking labor amid the most beautiful scenery in the world, the pine woods of Oregon. Am firmly convinced that all timberbeasts are crazy, with the perverse type of craziness that makes a man proud of the amount of work he can perform under the toughest possible conditions.

Left the woods after ten years of it, and solemnly swore that if I never saw a log again, it would be too soon. Held a variety of other jobs since, ranging from truck driver to salesman. Now I find myself standing on the curb and sniffing the breeze nostalgically every time a loaded truck goes by.

AND Webb B. Garrison—who contributes "Giant Against the Sky,"—the fact story on the astonishing career of Christophe, Emperor of Haiti, who rose from slavery to a unique role in history—modestly calls himself just an "armchair adventurer."

Afraid my own story doesn't offer much of interest. I'm strictly an arm-chair adventurer. I'm a young (30) Methodist minister whose daily grind seldom affords anything more exciting than a Sunday School picnic or a hair-pulling among the members of the choir—not that there isn't plenty of mayhem among the saints. I'm fascinated by off-trail fact stories, and am particularly interested in the biographies of little-known men of action.

Christophe came to my attention when someone said that the only real emperor in the Western Hemisphere was a Negro. It sounded like a story, and several months of research proved that it was. Eugene O'Neill, incidentally, used Christophe as the model for the chief character in his famous play, "The Emperor Jones." Travellers to Haiti may still see the ruins of Christophe's great public buildings.

Have been reading *Adventure* for a number of years, and am delighted that it now carries more fact stories—not only because I write 'em, but also because I'd rather read 'em than fiction.

While serving as a pastor, I've been freelancing for the last five years. My published stories and short features run to about 225,000 words—in such magazines as *Coronet*, *Pagant*, *Country Gentleman*, *True Police Cases*, *Detective World*, *Your Life*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *American Weekly*, and others. I've written several biographies for use in school textbooks. Last, but far from least, I have several ideas in the pot, through which I hope to be seeing *Adventure* readers frequently in the future.

CAPTAIN Leo C. Murphy, who has joined our "Ask Adventure" staff as Newfoundland correspondent, submits a concise biographical sketch to introduce himself to the readers of *Adventure*.

Journalist; Captain, Royal Newfoundland Regiment, World War I; wounded in action; Commissioner of the Supreme Court; Publicity Officer, Dept. of Defence, World War II; wrote "Newfoundland's Part in the Great War;" contributor to many English, Scottish, Australian and Canadian magazine and periodicals.

WILMON MENARD'S macabre South Seas tale in this issue—"The Cave of Death"—had such a strange ring

of truth to it that we wondered if it described an incident that had actually occurred. We queried the author and here's his reply—

"The Cave of Death" is indeed based on fact. Naturally, I have had to color it up quite a bit, and use my imagination on its conclusion. There was a similar situation that took place at the atoll of Tureia in the Dangerous Islands some years back. A trader killed a half-caste supercargo on a copra-schooner and then hid his body in the wrecked hull of a schooner sunk at the southern end of the atoll in three fathoms of water. Pearl divers found the body a month later, and the trader was convicted and sent by the French Colonial Government to Devil's Island, where he died. The coral limestone of a coral atoll is too hard and brittle for burial, and in many instances vaults are built above ground for corpses, and in the case of this murder the killer had to get rid of the body in a hurry and he found a schooner for its concealment, conveniently sunk in shallow water.

In my John Tuttle-Ben Motts piece, I have had to reconstruct the solution from imagination and what facts were at hand, which seemed to bear out my theory. This story might be labeled "semi-fiction." But it is close to a factual murder case.

DETAILED documentary notes accompanying the manuscript of H. G. Russell's fact story, "The Secret Weapon of the Southern Navy," afford us an extraordinary insight into naval operations during the Civil War.

The following documents from the official records of both the United States and Confederate Navies will serve to authenticate some of the details in the opening incident of "The Secret Weapon of the Southern Navy" and perhaps throw additional light on the narrative:

Abstract log of the U. S. S. Minnesota.

April 9, 1864.—At 1:45 A.M. discovered, as I thought, a boat drifting by on the port beam. Hailed her several times. She answered "Roanoke." I ordered her to keep off or I would fire into her. Hailed the *Poppy*, who was hanging astern, but received no answer. The object by this time was steering straight for the ship and coming rapidly; could not see or hear any oars; ordered the *Poppy* to see what she was, hailing her three times, and the third time received an answer. I then called Captain Upshur. I then discovered the object to be a little steamer; ordered the *Poppy* to run her down, and endeavored to fire a gun at her, when she struck the ship abaft the main chains, and a tremendous explosion followed. She then backed off and steamed off

toward the mouth of the Nansemond River. Fired a shell at her from one of the IX-inch guns. Sounded the pumps and found the ship not making water. Called the small vessels and sent them to warn the other vessels of the fleet and to search for the torpedo boat.

April 11.—From midnight till 4 A.M.: Captain Fyffe, of the *Commodore Morris*, reported having chased the infernal machine, and that the *Dawn* fired a gun at it and made signal of alarm.

Extract from the report of the Secretary of the Navy of the Confederate States, April 30, 1864.

On the night of the 9th instant Lieutenant Commanding Hunter Davidson, in command of the torpedo boat *Squib*, with six officers and men, ran through the enemy's fleet off Newport News, attacked the flagship *Minnesota*, exploding a torpedo against her, and returned in safety under a heavy fire. The extent of the injury inflicted upon the ship has not yet been ascertained, but it is believed to be serious. The cool daring, professional skill, and judgment exhibited by Lieutenant Davidson in this hazardous enterprise merit high commendation and confer honor upon a service of which he is a member. A copy of his report is herewith submitted.

Report of Lieutenant Davidson, C. S. Navy. C. S. N. Submarine Battery Defenses, James River, Virginia, April 15, 1864

Sir: In obedience to your order I have the honor to forward the names of those who accompanied me on the torpedo expedition against the Federal steam frigate *Minnesota*, off Newport News, Va., April 9, 1864.

Each one performed his part throughout the trying circumstances attending the expedition to my entire satisfaction, and I could not have been associated with braver or better men, viz:

J. A. Curtis, acting master, C. S. Navy; G. W. Smith, acting master, C. S. Navy; Thomas Gauley, acting boatswain, C. S. Navy; H. X. Wright, first assistant engineer, C. S. Navy; Charles Blanchard, first-class fireman, C. S. Navy; William A. Hines, pilot.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,
Hunter Davidson,
Lieutenant, Commanding, C. S. Navy.

Hon. S. R. Mallory,
Secretary of the Navy.

Lieutenant Commander J. S. Barnes, U. S. N., one of the greatest and earliest advocates of torpedo warfare wrote in 1869, urging extensive adoption of this weapon. Discussing the attack on the *Minnesota* and the reasons for failing to destroy the great ship completely, Commander Barnes writes:

"All of the instances where torpedoes were successfully applied during the late war are evidences of the vast power of submarine explosions, against all sizes of vessels, and at greatly varying depths. The most complete case, and which may be looked upon in the light of a great practical experiment, is that of the attack upon the *Minnesota*. Here we have given: 1st, the quantity of powder exploded (53 lbs); 2d, the distance below the surface at which it was exploded (6 feet, as shown by the center of effect upon the ship's side); 3d, the fact that the charge was practically in contact with the ship at the moment of explosion, as it was ignited by a sensitive contact fuze; 4th, the extent of the injury resulting from the explosion.

"The law governing the explosion of powder in any position, as generally stated and received, is that its destructive energy is mainly directed in the direction of the line of least resistance. In vacuo, much of its force is lost for want of resistance; in mid-air, the force is exerted practically alike in all directions, confined, as in a gun, in the direction of the bore; in blasts, in a line between the bore and the face, or open side of the rock. So, in water, the fluid yields, in the first instance, in all directions, to the sudden expansion, but most rapidly in that direction which offers the least resistance to the passage of the gas to the air, which ultimately determines the force of the explosion; hence, in order that an object shall receive the full force that the charge is capable of exerting, this line of least resistance must pass through it.

"Applying this law to the case of the *Minnesota*, we must conclude that the resistance due to the form and material of the hull at the point of explosion was greater than the resistance offered by the column of water immediately over the torpedo, and that the greater part of the force exerted escaped directly upwards. That this was actually the case is shown by the large column of water forced into the air. Hence it follows that to have secured the destruction or sinking of the ship, 53 lbs. of powder should have been exploded at a greater depth than 6 ft. It may, however, be inferred, judging by the actual effect of this explosion, that had the charge of powder been considerably greater, the explosion would have been equally effective, as the smaller charge exploded deeper in the water. The following general deductions may be made: 1. The deeper the torpedo is submerged when in contact with a ship, the smaller may be the charge, and, *vice versa*, the nearer it is to the surface the greater must be the charge, in order that its explosion may disable or sink the vessel. Numerous instances have occurred where large torpedoes have exploded harmlessly at the water-lines of ships. A very early one is recorded in the attempt upon the French shipping at Boulogne, with Fulton's torpedoes.

"As is well known, absolute contact of the torpedo and ship is very far from being a necessary condition to her destruction, provided the requirements as to depth of submergence and quantity of powder are fulfilled."

Barnes is generous in his acknowledgement of the Confederates' success with the Secret Weapon and admits the Federals merely followed suit. He says:

"Within a very short period after the inception of the design, a system was formed so far perfect and complete that our progress upon the water was materially checked. The channels of approach to the ports of Wilmington, Charleston, and Mobile, which then remained to them, lined with sunken torpedoes of many different forms, and capable of ignition by a variety of agencies and clever devices. Rivers and bays, through which our vessels had passed freely and with impunity, now became dangerous ground, to be navigated with caution. Carrying out the original design of Fulton, which, as we have seen, so excited the derision of Commodore Rodgers, they armed the bows of their hitherto insignificant craft with these cheap and diminutive contrivances, converting them at once into tremendous engines of destruction, against which, when boldly handled, no amount of armor could prevail. Casting aside all high-flown sentiment, forgetting or ignoring the execrations with which its introduction was at first saluted, our Government adopted the system thus forced upon it, and the torpedo became with us, as it has since become with other nations, an acknowledged instrument of war."

Finally in commenting on the efficacy of the Secret Weapon Barnes says:

"We must bear in mind that two years of war had passed before the rebels made systematic use of the torpedo, and that during these two years the navy was most actively and successfully engaged in waters affording every opportunity for its advantageous employment. No one now doubts that our naval superiority would have been in some degree neutralized, had this system of defence been practised in its improved form at the commencement of the war. There is no doubt as to its efficacy. We have been taught, and other nations have learned through our experience, how terribly destructive it can be made."

Admiral Farragut's own report on the Battle of Mobile Bay, that final naval engagement of the war which the Federals won at a high price, is highly illuminating. Farragut says:

"It was only at the urgent request of the captains and commanding officers that I

yielded to the *Brooklyn's* being the leading ship of the line, as she had four chaseguns and an ingenious arrangement for picking up torpedoes. * * * The *Tecumseh* fired the first shot, and immediately the action became general.

"It was soon apparent there was some difficulty ahead. The *Brooklyn*, for some cause which I did not then clearly understand, but which has since been explained by Captain Alden in his report, arrested the advance of the whole fleet, while, at the same time the guns of the fort were playing with great effect upon that vessel and the *Hartford*. A moment after I saw the *Tecumseh*, struck by a torpedo, disappear almost instantaneously beneath the waves, carrying with her her gallant commander, and nearly all her crew! I determined at once, as I had originally intended, to take the lead; and after ordering the *Metacomet* to send a boat to save, if possible, any of the perishing crew, I dashed ahead with the *Hartford*, and the ships followed on, their officers believing that they were going to a noble death with their commander-in-chief.

"I steamed through between the buoys, where the torpedoes were supposed to have been sunk. These buoys had been previously examined by my flag-lieutenant, J. C. Watson, in several nightly reconnaissances. Though he had not been able to discover the sunken torpedoes, yet we had been assured by refugees, deserters, and others, of their existence; but, believing that, from their having been some time in the water, they were probably innocuous, I determined to take the chance of their explosion."

While the Northerners found their success threatened with impending disaster, Southern officers like Parker, in the face of ultimate ruin, went to work perfecting the Secret Weapon. The disappointments of the earlier half-successes and failures were borne with the calm acceptance of the veteran campaigners. Regarding the failure of one of his expeditions near Charleston, Lieutenant Parker wrote: "I had a pretty keen perception of what was to come when war was declared between the states, and I had made up my mind to bear up philosophically under all circumstances. Though disappointed at the result of our expedition, and somewhat anxious as to the saving of my men, I remember to have enjoyed a cigar among the orange groves very much that night, after a hearty supper of hard-tack and salt pork."

SOME notes on new books of interest to sportsmen:

Samuel Johnson, the testy old lexicographer and subject of Boswell's famous biography, once defined fishing as "a silly thing, practised by a fool at one end of a rod and line, and a worm at the other."

Approximately 15,000,000 fishermen in these United States would disagree violently with the good doctor's appraisal of their favorite sport. For these practitioners of the ancient and honorable art of angling (and we believe there are many *Adventure* readers among them) we want to recommend without reservation "Fresh Water Fishing" (A. S. Barnes & Co. \$5.00) by Arthur H. Carhart, a recognized authority whom we are proud to number among the members of this magazine's "Ask Adventure" staff. Mr. Carhart's book covers Bait & Fly Casting, Spinning, Lures & Equipment; it's comprehensively planned, entertainingly written and further enhanced by dozens of "how to" sketches by Hamilton Greene (whose work has appeared in *Adventure* for many years) and eighteen striking Kodachrome plates of lures and flies. A slew of books on fishing have been printed since Izaak Walton's classic volume, but for our money this one is tops—for novice or expert—both as an indispensable handbook and a handsome addition to the sportsman's library.

Mr. Carhart's pen is prolific as well as versatile, for another recent opus of his has come to our attention. It's called "Hi, Stranger!" (Ziff-Davis. \$3.00)—A Complete Guide to Dude Ranches—and if you know someone who is contemplating a dude ranch vacation you couldn't do him a bigger favor than to make him a present of it. Here are specific answers to the tenderfoot's questions on where to go, what to pack in his duffel bag, and how to conduct himself so that he won't be labeled "mail-order cowboy" by the dude-wranglers.

While we're on the subject of books, there's one more new one out that we can't resist mentioning here—"The Great Horse Omnibus," (Ziff-Davis. \$5.00), edited by Thurston Macauley—a Percheron-sized anthology of great horse stories from Homer to Hemingway, richly illustrated, and with an introduction by that noted fancier of the galloping geegees, none other than Bing Crosby. And speaking of horses, did you know that the last week in July is National Save the Horse Week? About time old Dobbin, as well as the Derby winner, rated a cheer!—K. W. G.

ASK



ADVENTURE

Information You Can't Get Elsewhere

THE fate of those fifty destroyers we traded to England.

Query:—Can you give me information concerning the fate of the 50 over-age destroyers “lent” to England? Because of depreciating comments made by Winston Churchill concerning these ships, I am most interested in the matter, such as records, losses, etc.

Mr. Churchill referred to them as “antiquated” (which I’ll grant) and “inefficient” (which I won’t grant).

—William A. Bowie,
Maplewood, N. J.

Reply by Frank Herold:—Regarding the fate of the 50 over-age destroyers we “lent” to England—you are very wrong on that main point. We did not lend them to England. They were *traded* to England in 1940 in exchange for 99-year leases for U. S. Air and Naval Bases on British soil stretching from Newfoundland to British Guiana. In an effort to ascertain their record (as a group), losses, etc., I contacted the British Consul here who referred me to the British Information Service, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 30, N. Y.

Here is their report:

1. All of the fifty over-age destroyers traded to England rendered valuable service in Atlantic and African convoys and as escorts to minelayers.

2. Four of them served with the Royal Canadian Navy.

3. At least eight of them were sunk in combat.

4. One, H.M.S. *Campbelton* (formerly U.S.S. *Buchanan*) had a “suicidal” ending, being sacrificed in a raid on St. Nazaire, France, in 1942. Filled with explosives, she rammed the lock gates of the French port in spite of fierce opposition, and, fuses being set and the crew taken off by escorting vessels, she blew up the following morning causing much damage.

5. Six were transferred, by agreement, to the U.S.S.R., and no information is available on their final disposition. One however was sunk by a U-boat in the Arctic Ocean in 1945. (This one is included in the eight mentioned above.)

6. After the war 22 of those remaining were broken up. The others are assumed to be in use as target ships, etc.

The records are by no means complete or in detail, and the outline is rather sketchy, but it’s all that they have. However, I do believe it answers your main query as to what happened to those 50 destroyers.

I know nothing of Mr. Churchill’s referring to them as “antiquated” (which you grant) and “inefficient” (which you won’t grant) but I’m sure he meant it in a practical sense and not as a reflection on their original design and construction. They were World War I destroyers. Coincident-

ally, I served a couple of years on one of them. We didn't have a single anti-aircraft gun aboard. My service on that particular one was right after hostilities but I was on a troopship during hostilities and made several trips across. The same thing applied. And we never saw a plane. But times change and in this case any World War I vessel was naturally inefficient in comparison to a World War II vessel. Of course they were remodeled in various ways. But bear in mind that a 1917 automobile remodeled in 1940 certainly wouldn't be as efficient for transportation as a 1940 model. In general, I feel that Mr. Churchill simply meant that anything becomes inefficient as it becomes antiquated. A few things, like wine, improve with age. On the other hand most other things, like eggs—see what I mean?

IN ECUADOR—strawberries and roses every day in the year!

Query:—I would like some general information about the upland country of Ecuador, particularly about the Quito region. Please answer a few questions about the climate, the government, health conditions, etc.

Is the climate, as rumored, one of perpetual spring? Does it get very cold at night? Are there frequent storms and strong winds? Is the region I mentioned thickly settled and excessively civilized? Would there be any land open there for settlement or claim? What sort of attitude do the government and the population at large assume toward American visitors? What requirements are there for entry into this country? Are restrictions placed upon foreigners after entrance? Has there been any great influx of adventurers into the country since the war? How is the rate of exchange and how are prices in general? Are insects and tropical diseases rife in the high country as they are in the lower tropical regions? How does one obtain a passport? Are seamen required to have one? After answering these "few" questions, if you still feel gabby, you might throw in a few words about the Ecuadorian Indians and native tastes in music, plus any fatherly advice you'd like to give a poor untraveled youth who feels the urge to go.

—M. O. Dacus
Winnsboro, Texas

Reply by Edgar Young:—If you send a dime (coin) to Pan American Union, Washington, D. C., and request their two booklets ECUADOR and QUITO, you will receive two illustrated pamphlets which contain about all the essential information regarding the topography, fauna, flora, etc., that you require. The Pan American Union is a union of all the American republics, including ours, and the dime partly pays the printing costs.

The climate in the highlands is very temperate, due to the altitude. Down along the Pacific coast it is extremely tropical and humid and in the narrow littoral between the base of the Andes and the ocean it is almost unbearable for a white North-American, but it is rich land for cane, cacao, and other strictly tropical crops and the natives manage to farm it their way with rich financial returns. In the highlands you will notice corn, beans, wheat, millet, and almost all other temperate zone stuff being raised; and it is hard to find better cattle, horses, and mules than they have up there in certain areas. Not far east of Quito is the last Andean range and after this is crossed and progress made to the edge of the Amazon basin, you are into tropical and hellish country again.

If you intend to go to Ecuador by ship, you will arrive at Guayaquil which is four miles up the Guayas River, and the railroad leaves from Duran just across the river. It is damnably hot and unhealthy in both places but when you are on the train and heading up the slopes the temperature begins to moderate and soon you are in enjoyable climate and it gets cooler from Huigra on up. It is something like 250 miles from Duran to Quito and the first quarter of the distance is up the mountain and the line twists and turns; but along in the afternoon you are in the highlands and the train picks up speed and highballs across the plateau between lines of snow-clad mountains, some of which are smoking volcanoes.

The booklets I mention will describe and picture this country. There are no unusual storms up there and while the nights are on the chilly side there are few that are below freezing. The plateau is just a level-bottomed valley surrounded by high, snow-clad mountains, and you can get into cold climate by just climbing these to certain altitudes. Roses bloom all the time and one can eat strawberries at Quito every day in the year.

The immigration laws are similar to ours and while they will give an immigrant land, they usually want him to accept it in some place where the border is in dispute with some neighboring country or where the climate is unsuitable.

The country is backward. Quito was one of the capitals of the Inca empire and many of the old buildings are still standing. The people are mixed Spanish-Indian (Quechua) and they do most of their work in the old-time primitive way. In a way they resemble Mexicans and the language is about the same. I learned Spanish in Arizona and it did me quite well in Ecuador. They have some good roads and there are buses making the run from Guayaquil and between other cities. The prevailing religion is Catholic. In a way the whole highland country may be compared to the highlands of Mexico about fifty or eighty years ago.

Americans are just fairly well liked in

ASK ADVENTURE

Ecuador and they don't go crazy over us as they do in Brazil and to a lesser extent in Peru. Individually a guy can get along fine with them if he has a good turn. There are quite a few gringos scattered about over the country, also some Englishmen and other white foreigners.

All that is required for entry is a passport and about \$300 in money so that you will not become a government charge. The usual passport is obtained by writing to the Secretary of State of our government at Washington and requesting an application. When this is filled out and small photo furnished, plus \$10., the passport will be mailed to you. This must be examined by the Ecuadorian consul at the port of departure and he visás it. I think a seaman's passport will serve but it will be just as well to consult the Ecuadorian consul at the port of departure to find out. I didn't have any myself but I am an old hand down there and got by.

The usual rate of exchange was two of their dollars for one of ours, but the exchange is in our favor now and runs from three to one in some countries to five in others; and one of their dollars will buy more down there than one of ours up here now.

The airplane from New Orleans make the hop in one day and while the fare is high it is possibly no higher than it is by ship and train, and all bad climate is bypassed by landing in Quito from a plane.

TEN thousand dollars' worth of atomic energy.

Query:—A friend whom I've known for years has recently confided to me that some twenty-five years ago he located a deposit of mineral which on being assayed turned out to be 86% uranium. This sounds rather fantastic to me. I have been invited to join him in an effort to re-locate this deposit and would like to get an idea from you of the approximate cost of an outfit and equipment sufficient to last for a month's prospecting trip in the mountains.

Should the location be re-established, what would be the procedure to file claims and what would the filing cost be?

I know nothing of mining and although I trust my friend, yet my common sense prompts me to get some expert advice and opinions on my own.

I have been informed that the government will pay a \$10,000 bonus for the discovery and will take over the mining operations on a basis of the present price of \$1400 a ton.

—Thomas J. Given
Houston, Texas

Reply by Victor Shaw:—The uranium percentage you mention as 86% is not so very, as you say "fantastic." On the contrary, the richest samples of pitch-blende in the El Dorado mine, Gt. Bear Lake,

Canada, go that high, although its run-of-mine ores average around 60%. Also there are quite a few secondary ores of uranium with higher percentages; such as becquerelite at 90%—schoepite at 87%—soddyite at 86% and others at a bit less.

However, don't mistake a high percentage of uranium oxide U O as meaning you've got a *minable* deposit of uranium ore! There are more than 100 secondary or alteration minerals that run high, but all of these only occur in spotty small isolated patches or pockets. They are merely curios, nice specimens for collectors' cabinets. One big trouble in this present stampede to win the \$10,000 bonus award is that most of them do not understand about such facts, viz: that the *only* ores that interest the A.E.C. are pitchblende, carnotite, and lately thorium. Right now, the *only ore* for which the bonus will be paid is pitchblende; *but*, a deposit of this mineral must be big enough to ship in *carload lots* for an indefinite period. Quite a few promising finds have been made the past few years, but Philip C. Leahy head of the A.E.C. office at Grand Junction, Colo., said in a talk in Los Angeles last month that "as yet no bonus award had been made." This in the face of the fact that the new discovery in the old Caribou silver mine near Boulder, Colo., has by core drilling found a vein from 6 to 8 ft. wide of high grade pitchblende and could have shipped several times 20 tons, but are determining the size of that ore body *first!* Of course, they'll get the bonus, but it will be peanuts beside the \$3.50 a lb. paid for their ore of 20% plus.

I've gone into details to make it clear that possibly your friend found a sample of a secondary uranium mineral like soddyite, or schoepite. Mind, I say *possibly!* You can't tell until it's relocated and samples taken for analysis to determine its true nature—if it is an alteration mineral, or a sample of pitchblende in a vein outcrop. I very much doubt, however, that it can be a pitchblende outcrop with the high assay you mention. That usually occurs only with surface exposures of the secondary types of uranium-bearing minerals.

I speak with some authority because I know my stuff. Any of the qualified experts will tell you the same. And here's another hint: perhaps your friend had his assay from an ordinary assayer, and few of those to date are competent to handle uranium minerals. If you do relocate this discovery, I suggest you mail a fair sample direct to the U. S. Atomic Energy Commission, Division of Raw Materials, Box 30, Ansonia Station, New York 23, N. Y. They'll analyze it and say what it is.

Another point: I've a recent listing of known uranium mineral occurrences in all the States. For Texas, I've known for years that there was some at Barringer Hill now covered by a lake, in Llano Co., in the form of nivenite, a secondary

mineral. Gadolinite is reported in Burnet Co., in red granite; it's found in pegmatite, and is black to a greenish-black, brittle, conchoidal fracture like flint, looks greasy or vitreous, but just specimen stuff. And some 5 miles south of Bluffton a report locates 7 secondary radio-active minerals: fergusonite, allanite, gummite, gadolinite, yttrialite and cytolite. All specimen stuff, too.

Still this doesn't mean there is no pitchblende, or carnotite; nor thorium, (which occurs in monazite and also is radio-active) in Texas.

O. K. now if you want to stake claims, it is done the same as with any other ore vein or deposit; a full claim is 1500 ft. by 600 ft. staked in a rectangle with center-line along the vein. You'll have to get the Texas mining laws. I have 'em for most States but not yours. In New Mexico they're like those of California, but allow 90 days from discovery to file for record at the local Land Office, or Court House.

You might get State mining laws in Houston, or maybe Austin, any they'll give method of staking and recording claims. You have to do "location-work" on a claim in the 90-day period, ten feet on vein either by a tunnel, 10-ft. shaft, or a 10-ft. open cut. Printed blanks to fill in are usually sold for 5c at stationery stores, giving a location-notice to post on your "location post" where discovery is made.

General equipment should include a camping outfit, and a tent is OK in Texas from now until late fall, a wall-tent with a fly. Also is included, bedroll, ax, fire-arms, hiking boots, clothing suitable, grub, lantern and coal oil, other conveniences like gloves, and proper tools.

Your tools just for prospecting are few; but to hunt uranium ore you'll need an iron mortar & pestle, a miner's 3-lb. pick, and a 3-lb. mine's striking hammer. These will cost about \$10-\$12 new, but you might get a second-hand pick and shovel for \$1 each, total less than \$10.

However, for uranium prospecting, your chief instrument or tool is a Geiger Counter, and you cannot do anything without one, unless you understand fluorescent minerals and can use the "Blacklight" instrument one type of which costs as low as \$12.50 and is light and does the job. Geiger Counters usually cost \$145, but one is put out by Omaha Scientific Supply Co. 3601 North 24th St., Omaha 10, Nebraska for \$100 complete with ear phones, battery, counter tube, waterproof case and full instructions. It is called "Model TX-6," and weighs only 4 lbs. net.

Your general equipment (camping outfit) shouldn't cost too much and you'll probably have your bedding, clothing, rifle, gloves etc. now. A wartime "Mountain tent for 2 men" only costs around \$27.50 at Army Surplus Supply stores. Or might get one at second-hand. For transportation in Texas, I imagine you-all have cayuses: two riding and one to pack. But

look—the A.E.C. pays \$3.50 a lb. pitchblende ore of 20% U O but in not less than 10-ton lots. Bonus only given after *much* mining is done!

The A.E.C. circular No. 1—Domestic Uranium Program, states that "for *refined* uranium, \$3.50 a lb. of contained uranium oxide is paid. For uranium-bearing ores and concentrate is paid \$3.50 a lb. of recoverable U O, *less* the cost per pound of refining such ores."

And note this: "The minimum quantity and grade of uranium ore or concentrate delivered to the Atomic Energy Commission is 10 tons that assay not less than 10% by weight of U O."

This means if a mine has its own refinery it sells at \$3.50 a lb. for its *refined* ore. If it has no refinery, the cost for refining is deducted from the \$3.50 a lb. payment.

And the A.E.C. will not accept *less* than one ton refined ore.

In re the BONUS: the A.E.C. circular No. 2 states that "a bonus of \$10,000 will be paid for each new discovery of uranium ores providing certain requirements are satisfied." These are that the ore averages 20% or more of contained U O, and also that the deposit or ore body is of large enough size in depth, width, and whole extent to furnish tonnage. Also: "the bonus is payable when 20 tons are delivered to the A.E.C. that assay 20% or more of uranium oxide—U O."

You see, you can't trust unreliable news reports or hearsay.

I suggest that you write to the Omaha Scientific Supply Co. at 3601 North 24th St., Omaha 10, Nebraska asking for their circular and price of their TX-6 Geiger Counter, and also ask for their printed instruction on its use, as well as their directions on how to make one of your own.

This is a rather long letter, but it's a big subject with many angles. So, if you wish further data on equipment or prospecting for uranium deposits write me again.

In any case, here's wishing you luck—*plus* the bonus award!

ISLAND of women.

Query:—I am writing to you in request of information on the Polynesian island in the French Society group, known as Rapa. Can you tell me where I may purchase books on this place, either in North America or Australia? Any periodicals or magazines dealing with this island, and also Tubuai Island, northwest of Rapa? Rapa was discovered by Captain Vancouver. I will be greatly appreciative of any and all information you can give me on this remote and mountainous isle. Where may I secure photographs of this island and other islands in the Austral group? Are there photographic magazines published in Australia, dealing with these island groups? If so, will you kindly list them. I wish to settle in the Society Islands—Cook Islands

area. Can you tell me the possibilities of securing employment such as trader, plantation overseer, supercargo, vanilla production, etc.?

—William J. Dawson
Powell River, B. C.

Reply by William McCreadie:—In reply to your query about Rapa, it is an interesting island, particularly for its preponderance of females. Native food, in the past, was always scarce, which does not speak well for its productiveness. But there were 4,000 inhabitants in those days and about 200 to 300 now. The island is 25 miles in circumference and almost divided in two by a magnificent harbor. It is mountainous. The village of Ahurei, on the bay of that name, is buried in coffee and orange trees. Mt. Perahu, 2066 feet high is the highest peak in the island. The natives are Christian and a kindly people. There is a church. There is no barrier reef, but many coral "heads" exist in the big harbor. Tubuai is six miles long by three wide. It is hilly, well-wooded, and surrounded by a coral reef. The population is small but truculent to strangers. The soil is fertile. Oranges, coffee, copra and arrowroot are grown, white cattle and pigs do well. Turkeys are sent to Tahiti markets. Makatea has immense deposits of phosphates. Many hundred of tons have been exported. Operations are carried on by the *Compagnie Francaise des Phosphates de l'Océanie*, whose shareholders are French and British. The phosphate is of high quality. The 1931 census showed there were 1100 people on the island, which lies 120 miles from Tahiti. It consists of coral, 350 feet high. The laborers are Japanese, Chinese, Annamese and local natives. There is a steel cantilever loading pier, similar to those on Nauru and Ocean Islands.

Finally, the French Government doesn't encourage white settlers and present laws are strict—one must be well-equipped with funds.

Better write to the British Consul at Papeete for full particulars (or to the French Governor General's office). There is little chance of employment for a white man on any of the above islands or anywhere in Oceania. Cheerio.

HORSES and horsemanship.

Query:—I have been interested in horses as long as I can remember, and have had my own horse for six years and would like to learn more about horses and horsemanship. I am a navy veteran 21 years old. For a time I was going to school under the G.I. Bill, under Mr. Grey Hedden of "Hedden School of Riding" then located at Canal Winchester, Ohio. He has since discontinued his school and I am wondering if there are any other schools of this

kind where I could go further. I am not interested in a correspondence school. What I had in mind was not merely riding instructions, but gaiting, highschool, dressage, breeding, showing and the works. I realize there is no school that would teach all this but I would like to learn all I could. I would prefer a school stressing saddle horses but trotters or pacers would do, if there were no others.

Also I would like to know if there are any Hollenzollern breed horses from the Royal Riding Academy of Vienna in the U. S.

Could you recommend any books about the Hollenzollern breed, as I would like more information about them, and any good books about horses and horsemanship.

—Jack Meuret
Dayton, Ohio

Reply by John Richard Young:—You are not the first veteran I've had to disappoint in your desire to learn advanced horsemanship under a qualified instructor in a regulated school of horsemanship. Other young men share your desire, and I'm sure that anyone who can and will fulfill it will find the business a real gold mine. Unfortunately, however, I know of no such school in this country; it's a favorite gripe of mine. Of course, there are individual horsemen who could—if they would—teach you all you'd want to know about certain phases of riding such as dressage, gaiting, stock horse training, etc. But to go to school under such an individual under the G. I. Bill you would first have to find your desired teacher yourself, then get the approval of your local board of the Veterans' Administration. (If you are physically disabled veteran, the V. A. will do this finding job for you; although how satisfactory that would turn out from your viewpoint is an open question.)

Charles O. Williamson, Box 394, Boise, Idaho, a veterinarian, runs a training stable, and might be interested in your idea. Why not write to him? Mention that I referred you to him.

I never before heard of a "Hollenzollern" breed of horses; I don't believe there is such a breed. Are you sure you don't mean Lippizan horses? They are the ones used in the Spanish Riding School of Vienna. There are a few specimens in this country. The late Winfield Sheehan, motion picture writer and producer, who made the picture *Florian*, based on Felix Salten's novel of the same name, about a Lippizan horse, owned several that were presented to his wife by the Austrian government—the first Lippizans ever to be given or sold to any private individual and for several years the only specimens of the breed in America. In 1945 the U. S. Army imported nine Lippizans into this country as spoils of war captured from the Germans (who hooked them from Austria). These horses were turned over to the U. S. Remount

Service, which is now under the jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture. A few of the stallions are now leased out with private owners in the West, under the Remount system of breeding. Others, including mares, are now, I think, at Fort Reno, Oklahoma, or were until recently.

The *Horse* magazine, published by the American Remount Association, Otis Bldg., Washington 6, D. C., published a very interesting, complete article on the Lippizan horse in the July-August, September-October, 1947 issues. You can still get these at 50¢ a copy. *The Spanish Riding School in Vienna* (\$6.00) by Decarpentry and *The Spanish Riding Academy of Vienna* (\$3.00) can be obtained from Animal Lovers' Book Store, Tarzana, California. Both are illustrated and authentic.

WEAKFISH and striped bass.

Query:—I would like to ask your opinion on a subject about which I can find very little information in any of the sporting magazines.

I have been a fresh water enthusiast for years; however, last summer I spent a week at the Connecticut shore. A friend and I caught a number of weakfish and striped bass, using equipment borrowed from a local fisherman and using his advice as to how to catch them. For the weakfish a bloodworm was hooked behind a pearl wobbler and allowed to float above a sinker that rested on the bottom. For the striped bass we trolled, using a bloodworm hooked behind a large June-bug spinner. However, the equipment used was heavy, and after a fish was on he was just hauled in. It struck me, as it has many others, that these fish have a bit of fight in them, and if taken on light tackle would be real sport.

My equipment consists of a bait casting rod, five feet in length, designed for $\frac{5}{8}$ oz. lures, a level winding bait casting reel with fifty feet of 9 lb. test nylon line. My stock of lures at present consist of spoons, popping plugs, several deep running lures, such as the "Flatfish" and the "Pickie Minnow." The spoons are of the Daredevil type, red and white with a gang of three hooks, and I have a spoon by the trade name of "All Lure". It is luminescent and has a rubber skirt. The advertisement read that it was good for all fresh or salt water fish. So far I have gathered nothing but seaweed from it.

I have tried, at various times, all of my lures with no satisfaction as to even a strike. I have tried a few times at the exact spot where I caught a 4-lb. striper. The exception being that I was on the shore casting, and of course the different outfit.

I would appreciate very much your advice and comment on the type of fishing that I mention. Most of my lures have taken fish in fresh water, ranging from

pickerel, bass, and other inland species, and I can't understand why they won't take the salt water variety. Am I using the wrong lures, and if so, what can you suggest?

To be quite frank, as a greenhorn at this type of fishing, I will greatly appreciate any and all information on it.

—Robert H. Whitney
Newington, Conn.

Reply by C. Blackburn Miller:—In acknowledging your recent letter am of the opinion that your bait casting rig is thoroughly adequate for weakfish, especially if you should choose to chum with shrimp which is most efficacious.

I think, however, that this same rig might prove a bit too light for striped bass, although sufficient for the four pounder that you mentioned in your letter. If the fish off the Connecticut shore do not run much heavier than that, your bait rod would prove heavy enough, but if they ran any real weight you would be out of luck.

Personally I use a rod that is of sufficient weight to cast a "salt water plug" which is far larger than the fresh water varieties and they furthermore have hooks of tempered steel that can stand the strain of a heavy fish. Striped bass, be they large or relatively small, demand a large plug and after trying all varieties, find that the "blue-fish" colored plugs are the most efficacious. These should not be retrieved too fast and with rather a jerky motion. I think that with this technique, you should attain success.

ACAPULCO in the winter and Guaymas in the summer.

Query:—I've been a reader of *Adventure* for a long time, and have for some time been going to try this service out of getting a little info on some things.

I'm figuring on a fishing trip to the Gulf of California, and am very interested in where is the best place to go, and any other advice that may be helpful. I have never done any salt water fishing in my life, but am anxious to give it a whirl.

—F. S. Marr
Great Falls, Montana

Reply by C. Blackburn Miller:—Concerning your prospective fishing trip to the Gulf of California, I would suggest that if you intend to go during the winter months that you go to Acapulco and if during the summer season that you visit Guaymas farther up the Gulf.

I am not recommending tackle to you at this point, for I think it would be more advisable to visit one of these places first, rent tackle supplied by the boatmen, which is perfectly adequate, and then see if it appeals to you.

If it does you can then outfit from what you have learned from your trip.

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SPORTS AND HOBBIES

American Folklore and Legend: Songs, dances, regional customs; African survivals, religious sects; voodoo—HAROLD PREECE, c/o Adventure.

Archery—EARL B. POWELL, c/o Adventure.

Auto Racing—WILLIAM CAMPBELL GAULT, 4828 N. Elkhart Ave., Milwaukee 11, Wis.

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, c/o Adventure.

Basketball—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Broad St., Mattawan, N. J.

Big Game Hunting in North America: Guides and equipment—A. H. CARHART, c/o Adventure.

Boxing—COL. JEAN V. GROMBACH, c/o Adventure.

Camping and Outdoor Cookery—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Canoeing—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada.

Coins and Medals—WILLIAM L. CLARK, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th, N. Y. C.

Dogs—JACK DENTON SCOTT, R.F.D., Roxbury, Conn.

Fencing—COL. JEAN V. GROMBACH, c/o Adventure.

Fishing, Fresh water: Fly and bait casting; bait casting outfits; fishing trips—JOHN ALDEN KNIGHT, 929 W. 4th St., Williamsport, Penna.

Fishing, Salt water: Bottom fishing, surf casting; trolling; equipment and locations—C. BLACKBURN MILLER, c/o Adventure.

Fly and Bait Casting Tournaments—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Hiking—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, c/o Adventure.

Horses and Horsemanship—JOHN RICHARD YOUNG, c/o Adventure.

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motorcycling: Regulations, mechanics, racing—CHARLES M. DODGE, c/o Adventure.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: American and Foreign—DUNEGAN WIGGINS, 3325 Liberty Rd., Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns: American and foreign; wing shooting and field trials; gunsmithing—ROY S. TINNEY, Brielle, N. J.

Skating—WILLIAM C. CLAPP, The Mountain Book Shop, North Conway, N. H.

Small Boating: Skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y., N. Y.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 2, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—MURL E. THRUSH, New York Athletic Club, 59th St. and 7th Ave., N. Y., N. Y.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: American, north of the Panama Canal; customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Entomology: Insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Penna.

Forestry, North American: The U.S. Forestry Service, our national forests, conservation and use—A. H. CARHART, c/o Adventure.

Forestry, Tropical: Tropical forests and products—WM. R. BARBOUR, care of U. S. Forest Service, Glenn Bldg., Atlanta, Ga.

Herpetology: Reptiles and amphibians—CLIFFORD H. POPE, c/o Adventure.

Mining, Prospecting, and Precious Stones: Anywhere in North America, Prospectors' outfitting; any mineral, metallic or non-metallic—VICTOR SHAW, c/o Adventure.

ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS

Photography: *Outfitting, work in out-of-the-way places; general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Radio: Telegraphy, telephony history; receiver construction, portable sets—DONALD MCNICOL, c/o Adventure.

Railroads: *In the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling: HAPSBURG LIEBE, c/o Adventure.

Wildcrafting and Trapping—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burlin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE

United States Army—COL. R. G. EMERY, U.S.A. Ret., c/o Adventure.

United States Coast Guard—LIEUT. C. B. LEMON, U.S.C.G., Ret., Box 221, Equinunk, Wayne Co., Penna.

United States Marine Corps—MAJ. ROBERT H. RANKIN, U.S.M.C.R., c/o Adventure.

United States Navy—FRANK HEROLD, 1647 Charon Rd., Jacksonville, Fla.

Merchant Marine—KERMIT W. SALYER, c/o Adventure.

Military Aviation—O. B. MYERS, c/o Adventure.

Federal Investigation Activities—*Secret Service, Immigration, Customs, Border Patrol, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, c/o Adventure.

The French Foreign Legion—GEORGES SUREZ, c/o Adventure.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada.

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, c/o Adventure.

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

★**New Guinea**—L. P. B. ARMIT, c/o Adventure.

★**New Zealand, Cook Island, Samoa**—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Felling, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania**—ALAN FOLEY, 243 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands**—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, No. 1 Flat "Scarborough," 83 Sidney Rd., Manley, N. S. W., Australia.

Hawaii, Christmas, Wake, Canton, Midway and Palmyra Islands—CARL J. KUNZ, 211-3 Naska, Kahului, Maui, T.H.

Africa, Part 1 ★*Libya, Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. 2 *Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland, British Somali Coast Protectorate, Eritrea, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya*—GORDON MACCREAGH, c/o Adventure. 3 *Tripoli, Sahara caravans*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY GIDDINGS, c/o Adventure. 4 *Bechuanaland, Southern Africa, Angola, Belgian Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa*—MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER, c/o Adventure.

Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, Dept. of Anthropology, Columbia University, N. Y., N. Y.

Asia, Part 1 ★*Siam, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies, Ceylon*—V. B. WINDLE, Box 813, Rancho Santa Fe, Calif. 2 *Persia, Arabia*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY GIDDINGS, c/o Adventure. 3 ★*Palestine*—CAPTAIN H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. 4 ★*Afghanistan, Northern India, Kashmir, Khyber Pass*—ROLAND WILD, Savage Club, 1 Carlton House Terrace, London, S.W.1, England.

★**The British Isles**—THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., London, W. C. 2, England.

South America, Part 1 *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile*—EDGAR YOUNG, c/o Adventure. 2 ★*Argentina*—ALLISON WILLIAMS BUNKLEY, c/o Adventure. 3 *Brazil*—ARTHUR J. BURKS, c/o Adventure.

West Indies—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, c/o Adventure.

Baffinland and Greenland—VICTOR SHAW, c/o Adventure.

★**Newfoundland**—CAPT. LEO C. MURPHY, J.P., Great War Veterans' Office, St. John's, Newfoundland.

Mexico, Part 1 *Northern Border States*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex. 2 *Quintana Roo, Yucatan, Campeche*—CAPTAIN W. RUSSELL SHEETS, c/o Adventure. 3 ★*West Coast beginning with State of Sinaloa; Central and Southern Mexico, including Tabasco and Chiapas*—WALLACE MONTGOMERY, Central Sanalona, S. A., Costa Rica, Sinaloa, Mexico.

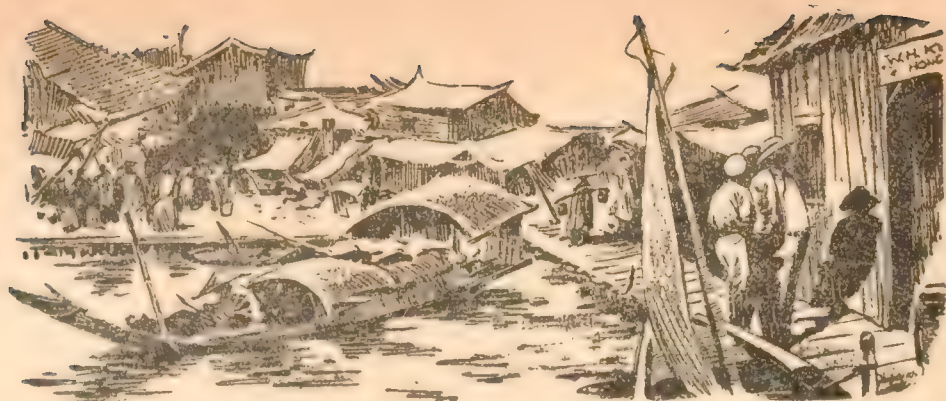
Canada, Part 1 ★*Southeastern Quebec*—WILLIAM MACMILLAN, 89 Laurentide Ave., Quebec, Canada. 2 ★*Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario*—HARRY M. MOORE, 579 Isabella, Pembroke, Ont., Canada. 3 ★*Georgia Bay and Southern Ontario; National Parks Camping*—A. D. L. ROBINSON, 103 Wembly Rd., Toronto, Ont., Canada. 4 ★*Northern Saskatchewan; Indian Life and language, hunting, trapping*—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada. 5 ★*Yukon, British Columbia, Northwest Territories, Alberta, Western Arctic*—PHILIP H. GOUSELL, F.R.G.S., General Delivery, Aldrie, Alberta, Canada.

Alaska—FRANK RICHARDSON PIERCE, c/o Adventure.

Western U. S., Part 1—*Pacific Coast States*—FRANK WINCH, c/o Adventure. 2 *New Mexico; Indians, etc.*—H. F. ROBINSON, 1321 E. Tijeras Ave., Albuquerque, New Mexico. 3 *Nevada, Montana and Northern Rockies*—FRED W. EGELSTON, P. O. Box 297, Elko, Nev. 4 *Idaho and environs*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill. 5 *Arizona, Utah*—C. C. ANDERSON, 616 N. 3rd St., Phoenix, Ariz. 6 *Texas, Oklahoma*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2093 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

Middle Western U. S.—*Lower Mississippi from St. Louis down, Louisiana Swamps, St. Francis, Arkansas Bottom*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burlin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

Eastern U. S., Part 1 *Maine*—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me. 2 *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., Mass.*—HOWARD R. VOIGHT, P. O. Box 716, Woodmont, Conn. 3 *Adirondacks, New York*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burlin Ave., Inglewood, Calif. 4 *Ala., Tenn., Miss., N. C., S. C., Fla., Ga.*—HAPSBURG LIEBE, c/o Adventure. 5 *The Great Smokies and Appalachian Mountains south of Virginia*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.



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ON SALE AUGUST 10th

LET THE GUNS TALK

(Continued from page 31)

up all hope for a future, and even had her past torn down behind her. She must have been standing outside the door for some time. She must have heard everything that had been said here in the office. It was Mrs. Reeve.

I got my chance then. It wasn't much of a one, but it was the last one I'd ever get so I took it. The gun wavered and dropped, even as Martin Reeve did. His gaze wandered off in a lost sort of way and my hand jumped for my .45.

It still wasn't too late for him to level that gun off and beat me. I don't think it was. But he didn't do it. He never got his gaze pulled out of the middle space that he was so deep in, so I shot him. Once. High in the shoulder. He spun around crazily and slammed to the floor and that's all there was to it.

Mrs. Reeve hammered on the door and screamed. I stood there and watched a little loop of smoke come up from the muzzle of my .45 and I watched Reeve as he lay on the floor, kind of propped against the wall there in the corner of the room. He wasn't hurt much, but he was dazed and it would take him a while to come out of it. He looked up at me then, almost absently, as if I were a stranger that he'd never seen before. I guess he wasn't much interested in me any more. His son was lost to him. And now his wife. That didn't leave much of anything to be interested in. I put my gun away and unlocked the door and went out.

Mrs. Reeve was there. I didn't want to see her face, so I didn't look at it. I held her back while I locked the door again and said, "Everything's all right. He isn't hurt bad." Then I went out to find the sheriff.

The sheriff had an idea that something was wrong, but he hadn't made his mind up yet on what to do about it. He was standing in the middle of the front room looking peeved, like a hungry bulldog that had just been fed a rubber bone.

I said, "You'd better get into Reeve's office. He's just made what amounted to a confession to the rustling, before two witnesses." Then I remembered something and almost yelled, "And hurry!"

The sheriff did his best, after he got

things straight—but it wasn't good enough. There was a sharp little explosion, the kind of sound a derringer would make, and I knew it was all over. I cursed myself for forgetting that gun and leaving it in the office, but it was too late for that now. I gave the sheriff the key and he hurried over to the door and twisted it open. I didn't go with him. I knew what he would see.

Reeve had taken the sure way out of the fix he was in.

I walked out of the house and sat on the front porch and waited for the sheriff to come and ask his questions.



THEY had the funeral the next day. I was there, and a preacher, and Mrs. Reeve. That was all. It was one of those windy days like you get a lot of on the prairie: the wind comes whispering and moaning through the dry grass, and makes sudden whirlpools of red dust and sends them spinning across the flats like a gypsy dancer. I listened to the wind, and to the words the preacher said, and wondered why I had bothered to come here in the first place. Maybe I had hoped that by being here I could get some idea what Martin Reeve had in mind when he started all this.

If anything like that was what I had thought, it was a waste of time. Nothing came. I doubt that even Reeve could have told why he had gambled his life and his family and his name on a rustling career. It was just one of those things. That seems to be the answer to a lot of things that winds men up in one sort of Boothill or another.

So pretty soon it was over. Me and the preacher lowered the pine box in the grave and shoveled the red clay in on top. I stuck around for a few minutes, even after the preacher and Mrs. Reeve had gone. Then I got on my horse and headed for Wagnor.

When I got there I'd have to wire the Old Man that the job was over. And I could tell him he would have to tie me up to another partner—the one I had was staying here and marrying what had been our chief suspect.

Women.

(Continued from page 103)

Roades hysterically throw her arms around Old Rocky's neck.

Clint Weston crawled through the fence. He looked back, and said, "You're all man, fella."

John Barnes arose slowly, staggered to the horse, touched it with his toe. "Get up! You've got plenty fight left. Get up!"

The outlaw got to its feet with Barnes in the saddle. The Killer Dun stood for a moment as if marshalling its strength for a final climactic effort. Its heart pounded, its nostrils expanded and quivered. It looked at the spectators, at the man on its back, at the empty prairie flowing unrestrained to the far horizon. It ran!

Ride's over! thought Barnes exultantly.

Just beyond the stands the outlaw rose in a tremendous leap. It turned over in the air, crashed down on its back and side. The rare forward somersault or pinwheel, the most deadly act of a pitching horse. Barnes threw himself clear, landed rolling. He held onto the hackamore rope. Too weak to stand he crawled to the horse. It lay with head unnaturally twisted.

The Killer Dun was a suicide.

Naked to the waist, smeared with sweat, dust and blood, sick, exhausted, John Barnes slumped on the ground by the horse. He stroked its ear, ran his fingers through its mane. Moisture dimmed his sight.

Brokenly, he said, "No hard feelin's, fella. It wasn't your fault. You were a man's horse . . . Died game."

John Barnes looked up. People around him. Ranger Clint Weston was there. Come to get his man. Billie-Joe Roades was there, laughing and crying and dabbing at her eyes. Old Rocky helped him to his feet, held him. The girl helped, too, a dainty hand on his naked and grimy arm.

He looked the Ranger in the eye, and said, "Give me a little time to wash up and eat, then I'll be going back with you."

Weston nodded. "Wish you didn't have to go. Take all the time you need."

Old Rocky grunted, and growled, "You're doggoned right he will! And when he goes, I go with him. Men like him are mighty scarce and this tough country can't afford to hang 'em."

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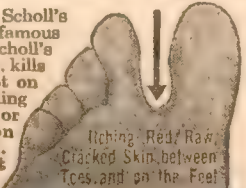
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(Continued from page 37)

Then gracefully, with a slow, deliberate movement, the monster slid below. But it remained ever within sight of his fear-glazed eyes, its body, in contrast to the shadowy pool, like an incredible hoary phantom of the sea.

Motts must have given a wild, strangled scream and have drawn back trembling against the green dripping wall. But quickly he realized the futility of trying to call for help. The constant roar of the South Pacific surf across the barrier reefs subordinated all other sound. And who was there on Hotu now to heed his cries of distress, even if they could be heard? The rising lagoon water would carry his clothes on the ledge above out to sea, and the taboo sign would keep native searchers from the arriving schooner clear of this vicinity.

Faintly, in the late afternoon, came the sound of a schooner's bell, the *Tautira* that was to pick him up. It is not improbable, under the circumstances, that he could have pressed his mouth against a large crack of his tomb and screamed hysterically. But his voice could not have possibly carried more than five feet beyond the clamorous edge of the surf. Then at last he heard the regular explosions of the schooner's auxiliary engines, gradually fading and merging with the faraway murmur of the sea.

"Don't go! Don't go!" he shrieked through the coral vent.

But he knew that the mail schooner had made its last call to the atoll and had sailed off without him.

A few hours later he crept hopefully to the edge of the black shelf and dropped a piece of coral into the pool. Instantly there was a responsive phosphorescent flash in the deep gloom of the water, and the great bulk rose slowly to the surface. In the afternoon he tried it again. Still the evil presence! Once more he tried, hours later.

Darkness gradually began to fill the horrible vault.

Then slowly into his brain seeped the deep and unshakable conviction that the great white killer-shark would always be there in the midnight pool, a constant and inexorable omen of retribution.

Motts sat shivering on the ledge, in-

articulate choked words bubbling in his throat. Whenever his horror-filled eyes lifted from the black pool, there was always the grinning skull of John Tuttle to mock him.

But the swift approach of night must have sent Motts' thoughts quickly into panic. He must have dived desperately into the pool, hoping to evade the monster and make the transit of the long underwater tunnel, or hoping for a fortunate strike at the huge monster with the shark-knife he had brought with him. That luck was not on his side was apparent from the signs of mutilations on his body. His right leg had been stripped to the bone of flesh; his upper arm was almost sheared off, and the base of the spine had been laid open and the spinal column severed. How he had ever climbed back to the ledge is astounding, considering his wounds. There he must have bled to death in terrible, lingering agony.

In separate cercloths the remains of the two white men were buried in the sea off the reefs of Hotu . . .

* * *

The copra workers and pearl divers have never returned to Hotu, although the stately palms are heavily loaded with coconuts and the pearl oyster beds flourishing. Only the noddies and the sooty boobies make their nests in the palm-leaf huts in the native village. Occasionally a copra or pearling lugger, seeking haven from a bad squall or to escape the path of a hurricane, accepts the safety of the lagoon, but never for very long.

It is a mournful forgotten isle, and the only sounds are the eternal thunder of the South Pacific over the barrier reefs and the lonely mewing of sea-birds.

A splintered sign with the word *TAPU!* burned upon it bears witness to the specter of murder and retribution that inexorably claimed the lives of two white men.

It is the most dangerous island.

THE END





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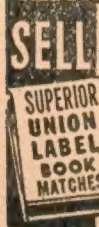
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Henry L. Durst, 2827 N. Cambridge, Chicago, Ill., would like to hear from Joe Bennett, Lt. Comdr., U.S.N.R., whom he met on the B.B. *Wisconsin* in 1947. Last heard from him from Port Arthur, Texas. He had lived in the Bronx, N. Y.

Anyone knowing whereabouts of Corp. McQuarry of Ashland, Me., formerly Co. C, 26th I. T. Bn., Camp Croft, please write Ed Stuart, Burgess Store, Va.

I would like to hear from anyone who has seen my brother, Sergeant Elmer J. Anderson #34783328, nose gunner in 15th Air Force, missing in action somewhere near Turnitz, Austria, August 23, 1944. He would be 24. George E. Anderson, 731 Crocker St., Los Angeles 21, Calif.

S/Sgt. Otis Hudson, Jr., 9217 Oels, Ft. Worth, Texas, would like to contact Charles Brenecke, formerly midshipman at the U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis.

Would appreciate receiving news of my brother, Ernest Voigt. When last heard from he was living on Eugenia St., Portland, Oregon, about 1930. Please write to William Voigt, Blackshear, Ga.

William A. West, 314 6th St., Bremerton, Wash., would like to hear from old friends in 331 School Squadron, 1942-43, Luke Field, Arizona.

Will anyone knowing whereabouts of my old overseas buddy, Joseph P. Doyle, of Boston, Mass., please ask him to get in touch with me? Guy A. Drummons, 516 South 4th St., Council Bluffs, Iowa.

Thomas Cooley, 1426 First Ave., N.Y.C. would like to locate Joseph Marshall, formerly of 500 E. 73rd St., New York, working at that time as orderly in New York Hospital.

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